# The Easiest Way

by

CHARLES FISKE

AND

BURTON EMMETT

CAMPUS CRUSADE FOR CHRIST LIBRARY

# THE REAL JESUS

*by*

BISHOP CHARLES FISKE

*and*

BURTON S. EASTON

"The special purpose of this book," according to the authors, "is that it tries to do what has never yet been satisfactorily accomplished by any book on the Life of Christ. We have attempted to give an account of the life, work, and teaching of Jesus as a readable and interesting story, while yet basing the account on the reasonably assured results of historical criticism."

Two men could hardly be better fitted to accomplish this task. Dr. Easton is Professor of New Testament at the General Theological Seminary, New York, and author of "The Gospel before the Gospels" and other critical works. The Rt. Rev. Charles Fiske is Bishop of Central New York and widely known as preacher and essayist. His magazine articles receive wide attention and with his many books, including "The Christ We Know," have established his reputation as a writer.

A careful analysis of Jesus' teaching shows its application in the problems of modern life. A critical study of the Gospel stories reveals the progressive understanding of the personality of their Master in the minds of the apostolic band. The problem of His birth and resurrection is dealt with frankly and from a new viewpoint.

*The Real Jesus*

*Other Books by Bishop Fiske*

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THE CHRIST WE KNOW
A Study of the Life of Jesus for the New Generation

THE CONFESSIONS OF A PUZZLED PARSON
And Other Pleas for Reality

THE PERILS OF RESPECTABILITY

THE FAITH BY WHICH WE LIVE

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*Other Books by Doctor Easton*

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE

THE GOSPEL BEFORE THE GOSPELS

# The Real Jesus

## What He Taught: What He Did: Who He Was

BY

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AND

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PROFESSOR OF THE INTERPRETATION AND
LITERATURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*New York and London*

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

MCMXXIX

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PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

*First Edition*

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# CONTENTS


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Preface | vii |
| I. | Another Life of Christ! Why? | 1 |
| II. | The Background of Christianity | 6 |
| III. | The Religious Revival at the Jordan | 11 |
| IV. | The Call of Jesus | 16 |
| V. | The Friendly Christ | 24 |
| VI. | The Ideal of Righteousness | 31 |
| VII. | The Christian Ethic | 43 |
| VIII. | The Heart of the Gospel | 51 |
| IX. | The Way of Progress | 60 |
| X. | Strong Son of God | 67 |
| XI. | The Source of Strength | 76 |
| XII. | The Great Hope | 87 |
| XIII. | The Healer | 95 |
| XIV. | The Greater Works | 103 |
| XV. | Action and Reaction | 110 |
| XVI. | The Present Kingdom | 120 |
| XVII. | The Crisis | 133 |
| XVIII. | Going up to Jerusalem | 145 |
| XIX. | The Days of Lost Opportunity | 155 |
| XX. | The Final Act of Service | 164 |
| XXI. | The Great Christian Feast | 174 |
| XXII. | Before the Grand Jury | 179 |
| XXIII. | Suffered under Pontius Pilate | 185 |
| XXIV. | Saturday | 191 |
| XXV. | Victory | 192 |
| XXVI. | The First Easter | 201 |
| XXVII. | The Gospel about Jesus | 210 |
| XXVIII. | The Mystery of the Birth | 222 |




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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| XXIX. | THE GOSPEL OF JESUS | 228 |
| XXX. | THE FOUR GOSPELS | 238 |
| XXXI. | THE MEANING OF IT ALL | 248 |
| | APPENDIX I. PALESTINE IN JESUS' DAY | 254 |
| | APPENDIX II. CHRONOLOGY | 261 |

# *PREFACE*

THE special purpose of this book—if not its only reasonable excuse for publication—is that it tries to do what has not yet been satisfactorily accomplished by any book on the Life of Christ. We have attempted to give an account of the life, work, and teaching of Jesus as a readable and interesting story, while yet basing the account on the reasonably assured results of historical criticism.

It is not easy to combine the "scholarly" and the "popular" in the writing of any book—still more difficult is such a task in telling the story of Jesus' life. A "popular" Life of Christ may degenerate into some hundreds of pages of sentimentality, flowing easily along in a steady stream which becomes shallower as its way widens. On the other hand, a "scholarly" Life, if not entirely incomprehensible to the layman, is apt to be deadly dull in style and dry as dust in its technical method. It necessarily deals with textual variants, literary criticism, historical credibility, forms, legends, myths, and so on.

We have tried to tell the story of Jesus simply, without over-sentimentalizing and without too free a use of the imaginative faculty; seeking, rather, to write with the reserve and restraint which characterize the Gospel narratives; endeavoring to tell a straight story

in plain and direct fashion, avoiding fine phrasing, certainly not straining after effect.

We have tried, at the same time, to base the account upon the best critical study of the Gospels, with frank acceptance of critical methods and their reasonable conclusions. Of course, the scaffolding was taken down after the erection of the edifice. We do not leave in full view a piled-up accumulation of critical research.

We have tried, in other words, to tell a vitally interesting story, without making it read like a court record, with a verdict reached after examination, cross-examination, and the judge's summation of the evidence. Our effort is to give in the language of the every-day man a Life of Christ which he can read easily, and, we hope, with interest, and which he may be sure does not evade problems, blink at difficulties, or rely on anything but reasonably certain records. We believe that the facts of history, critically recovered, can, in the case of Jesus Christ, assure the average man that the facts of experience rest on a firm historical basis.

It is our hope, also, that the account of the teachings of Jesus, as here summarized, will be found of special value. We have endeavored to make this summary clear, concise, full of common sense, and so stated as to set it forth in its adaptability to present-day problems.

The book is exactly what the title suggests: first, a careful study of what Jesus taught; second, a frank examination of the facts of his life—the story of what he did; third, though briefly, a record of what his

earliest followers believed about him, and a fair statement of the grounds on which they believed, with insistence upon the vital values of such a faith.

The genesis of the book is to be found in *The Christ We Know*,[1] portions of which have been reproduced, with little change, in the present volume. Those desiring a fuller discussion of the religious problems may be referred to it. The critical presuppositions are those of *The Gospel Before the Gospels*.[2] Passages which appear to be critically dubious have been omitted from discussion, although it by no means follows that every omitted passage is really considered doubtful. The Fourth Gospel has been used chiefly for interpretative purposes.

The estimate of Pharisaism is made after consideration of the contentions of such scholars as Mr. R. T. Herford and Dr. G. F. Moore, together with the reconstructions of the Jewish experts. In presenting the motives in the ethical teachings of Jesus, similar consideration has been paid to the most recent German work, such as that of Dr. Rudolf Bultmann and Dr. Hans Windisch. The fact that we have been unable to accept their main conclusions does not lessen our indebtedness to any of these scholars.

CHARLES FISKE
BURTON SCOTT EASTON

[1] By the Rt. Rev. Charles Fiske, D.D. New York and London, Harper & Brothers, 1927.

[2] By the Rev. Burton S. Easton, D.D. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons; London, Allen & Unwin, 1928.

*The Real Jesus*

# *Chapter I*

## Another Life of Christ! Why?

THE beginning of the preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." With these words Mark opens his Gospel. Four statements stand out in this single sentence. The Gospel is the story of a man, Jesus. This man was the Christ, the Redeemer promised in the Old Testament and long awaited by the people of the Old Testament, the Jews. This Christ, even in the very early days when Mark wrote, was regarded as being in a unique sense the Son of God. And this Son of God had brought good news to all mankind. To the devout believer, therefore, Jesus gives the whole universe its meaning; he is a figure not only of the past, but of the continual present, ever living, ever able and ready to enter into supremely intimate relations with those who believe in him and trust him.

But, even apart from such faith, interest in Jesus never flags. He is incomparably the most significant figure in history. His influence on our civilization is incalculable. No one can discuss the difference between right and wrong without—consciously or unconsciously, sympathetically or unsympathetically—using in some way the standards Jesus defined. In religion the effect of his teaching has been overwhelm-

ing; into the weft and warp of our religious practices, our religious ideas, our very thoughts about God, are woven concepts that originated with him.

Nor is his influence limited to "Christian" civilizations. In studying the past history of all the cultural religions of the East, we find that they have absorbed Christian elements to a degree always evident and sometimes amazing.[1] Even the religion historically least sympathetic—post-Christian Judaism—has been affected; many Hebrews are asking, "What think we of Jesus?" and in recent years extremely able and sympathetic studies of his life and teaching have been published by Jewish scholars.

The truth is, Jesus Christ cannot be ignored. Nobody seems to find it possible to let him alone. He is still Master. The records of his life are very scanty, yet the Central Figure in the story stands out clear in every reading of the scattered memorabilia of those who knew him. Born nineteen centuries ago, living a life human as our own, he is the Great Teacher in all things that come within the realm of the spiritual, and his teaching has revolutionized our thought of God. Living in an age that was simple as compared with our complex civilization, he yet dominates our thought on all social relationships. A Jew of the first century, his teaching is as fresh and wholesome today as when he first taught his little company of followers. Homely and plain of sense in his speech, so that the common people heard him gladly, he yet charms the poets of

[1] It is a great error to measure the effect of Christian missions by the number of full converts due directly to missionary effort.

every age, who find in his vivid teaching beauties of thought and expression at once their delight and their despair. Crucified as a criminal, he has been worshiped for centuries as Very God.

Even those who cannot accept the faith which has so proclaimed him cannot resist the attempt to give their own impressions of him—some with a confident boldness that brings its own rebuke, some with wistful longing to read into the mystery of his personality, some with earnest endeavor to fit his teaching into the life of today. All want to know his teaching. Perhaps if we begin, patiently, slowly, with real humility, to discover what he actually taught, we may come to more sure conclusions as to what he actually did and who he really was.

Early in the story we see how the followers of Jesus came to largeness of faith through their intimacy with him. They strove hard to understand before their minds grew accustomed to the greatness of all that this experience with him meant, but at length understanding did come. In studying the life of Jesus we shall need, above everything else, to come face to face with this experience of theirs, and ask whether we can find anything in our own experience which may justify a similar faith on our part. That is the supreme thing in any study of the life of the Master, because no other religion has ever been founded upon a person quite as Christianity is. No other person has presented the problem he presents. That is the reason men cannot get rid of him, cannot stop thinking of him, find that they are forced to make up their minds about him.

No excuse, then, is needed for fresh attempts to understand the meaning of Jesus' life and to recapture its beauty. Almost every month sees an addition to the number of "Lives of Christ," but the subject is never exhausted, and every earnest attempt to see Jesus as he was has its value. In the effort to paint his portrait and study his teachings, preconceptions of some sort are, doubtless, inevitable, but in the present book a sincere attempt has been made to keep preconceptions from distorting the facts. Our endeavor, likewise, is to tell the story as simply and directly as possible, in the light of what seem to be the assured results of historical research. Of the processes by which this research has reached its conclusions, as little will be said as possible—for those interested in the problems and able to study them the books are legion. We have even postponed to a late chapter a description of the Gospels, and have relegated to the appendix an ordered account of first-century conditions in Palestine.

Where should we begin? St. Matthew and St. Luke open with the birth of Jesus; St. John with a majestic prologue which explains the meaning of Jesus as preexistent before his appearance on earth. But the oldest Gospel, St. Mark, commences with the actual work and preaching of Jesus, and with a brief mention of his predecessor, John the Baptist. We shall follow this example.

That seems the natural order. Everybody is interested in what Jesus taught and in what he did, or is supposed to have done. We start, then, with his first

appearance as a religious leader and teacher, and, like Mark, we preface the story with a short account of the teacher who preceded him, prepared the way for his work, and helped to make men ready for his spiritual message.

## *Chapter II*

### The Background of Christianity

JESUS and John the Baptist were Jews. They were members of a race that had a unique genius for religion, of a people who were the ancient world's religious experts. As we derive our ideas of beauty from the Greeks and our conception of law from the Romans, so we derive our idea of God from the Jews. To this nation, life without religion was unthinkable.

It was a vital part of their belief that Israel had been chosen by God. Countless prophecies in their sacred Books—the Old Testament—assured Israel of a destiny equal to her calling. The contrast between this promised destiny and Israel's actual condition was poignant. At the beginning of our era she had, for nearly six hundred years, been under the power of one foreign nation after another—Babylon, Persia, Egypt, Syria, and Rome. For a short century, to be sure, there had been comparative freedom under native rulers, but certain even of these rulers were worthless tyrants, and brief periods of prosperity had only made the subsequent servitude more intolerable. To Jews everywhere the situation had become almost unendurable, and faith was torn by questionings. Why was God's chosen people subject to the iron rule of Rome

instead of to the rule of God? And how long must the condition last?

For something like two centuries a new school of prophets—today we call them "apocalyptists"—had been striving to solve these problems. Israel was suffering for her sins; this was the all but universal answer. But she might take heart. Her discipline was nearly completed. God's patience with the ruthless foreigners was almost at the end, and Israel had but little longer to wait. Creation was about to pass into its final stage; the kingdoms of this world were soon to become "the Kingdom of God."

This was the origin of the phrase that meets us everywhere throughout the Gospels. To Jewish ears it had but one meaning: a perfectly righteous state, in which God would rule as completely as He rules in heaven.

How soon would the Kingdom come? On every side voices were raised, predicting that it could not be long delayed; perhaps the greater part of the nation expected to see the great consummation within their own lifetime.

What would the Kingdom be like? Here many opinions were held, many views elaborated. All men agreed that it would be given up to the service and worship of God; no true Jew could hesitate in this belief. But unanimity went no further. In accord with the literal predictions of the Old Testament, many looked for the Kingdom on this earth; a rejuvenated Palestine, saved from its enemies forever, fer-

tile and prosperous, a land where all would live long and happy lives, and die peaceful and contented deaths. At the opposite pole of expectation, others sought the Kingdom not in this world—which was about to be brought to an end—but in the world to come; in a heaven where all would be immortal and would enjoy for all eternity the vision of God. Between these two extremes all sorts of pictures were drawn, in which earthly and heavenly elements were combined—often in most haphazard fashion.

How would the Kingdom come? Not without preliminary signs, some of which—men thought—were already fulfilled. The actual coming of the Kingdom must bring with it a drastic purging process which would leave as its citizens only the worthy. The strict traditionalists looked for a war which would destroy all the enemies of the Lord and sweep the hosts of Israel on to victory. Others pictured the end as a great judgment that would send the unrighteous to punishment or destruction. Or the two conceptions might be—and were—combined in many different ways, and with still other alternatives.

Who would enter the Kingdom? Only the righteous, of course. In very "popular" circles this might be thought to mean "only the Jews," with the "unrighteous" correspondingly defined as "all Gentiles." [1] No one of any reflective ability, however, would hold this doctrine. Practically everyone believed that some Jews would be excluded for their sins, while many taught that some Gentiles might be included. But

[1] *i.e.*, "non-Jews."

since to Jewish ears "righteousness" meant "obedience to God's Law," and since only the Jews knew this Law as written in the Old Testament, it was generally felt that the proportion of Gentiles must be small.

Who would bring in the Kingdom? Here, also, there were many opinions. Some teachers maintained that God would bring it Himself, without any agent or mediator. More common was the belief that God would employ an intermediary, that He would send some one to bring earth's history to an end and to establish the final consummation. To this intermediary the Jews gave the name "Messiah." [1]

It is of utmost importance for us to note that this is the only possible sense "Messiah" ever had or could have on Jewish lips at this time. "Messiah" could not mean merely one who taught God's will, no matter how perfectly; for such a teacher the Jews had a fixed title, "prophet." The Messiah was infinitely more than a prophet; a Messiah who did not *bring* the final Kingdom was no Messiah at all.

What would the Messiah be? Once more the teachers diverged. The older tradition clung to the idea of a "Son of David"; that is, just as David of old had rid the Holy Land of all enemies, so "David's Son" would be a Deliverer; only, of course, on a vastly greater scale. If, however, men thought of the Kingdom as heavenly, they naturally thought of the Messiah as heavenly also. According to this view he was pictured as sitting at God's right hand from the beginning of creation, waiting the day when he should

[1] "The Anointed One."

descend from heaven to accomplish the final redemption. And—to our ears most strangely—when the Messiah was thus conceived, and *not* as a human being, he was given the title "Son of Man." This seemingly contradictory usage has, of course, its historic explanation, but here we can only state the fact. As everywhere else in the expectations of the future, in the Messianic teaching earthly and heavenly conceptions were interwoven and blended in almost every fashion. But the Jews never thought that the "Son of Man" would become a man. Nor—at this period—did they ever think of the Messiah as suffering; his whole mission was to triumph.

Such was the background of the Baptist's preaching.

## *Chapter III*

### The Religious Revival at the Jordan

WHEN John appeared with his proclamation, "The Kingdom of God is at hand," there may well have been in his preaching a vagueness about the details of the coming age. The central message, however, was unmistakable, and to pious Israelites it was the greatest possible good news: the promised salvation was now at last to be fulfilled. Yet with this promise there was coupled a solemn and terrible warning: If the Kingdom was at hand, then judgment was equally at hand; men's eternal salvation hung on a verdict soon to be delivered.

John was a new kind of prophet—a man with a flaming message in his heart; a stern preacher of righteousness; young and with fiery enthusiasm; the inaugurator of a religious revival that became the sensation of the day; a man who could plead, but who more often threatened judgment.

Everything about the Baptist emphasized the threat. He was a young man, wind-beaten and weather-browned from his wilderness life, clothed in rough yellow garments of camel's-hair cloth, wearing a girdle of leather, his very costume recalling the prophets of old. There were a look in his eyes and a tone in his voice which made men feel that he had lived near to

God. His influence was great, his message impressive. All sorts of people flocked to hear him—plain members of the "proletariat," who listened to his denunciations of social abuses; ecclesiastics who listened, curious, anxious, suspicious, doubtful; other men whose hearts he aroused to a sense of their own unworthiness; a few quiet, earnest folk who mourned over the moral decline of the nation and rejoiced at John's preaching of the coming Messiah-King.

He was unsparing in denunciation. He addressed his hearers as a "generation of vipers." He was indifferent to approval or disapproval. In himself he was nothing, and it mattered not what men thought of him. Compared with the coming Messiah, he was of so little importance that he was not fit to stoop down and unlace the Messiah's sandals, a task that was relegated to the lowest slaves. A new kind of a revival preacher, indeed; not much in him to remind one of the revivalists of modern times, who think a great deal of what people say about them, are only too anxious to secure a personal following, and love to drink of the waters of adulation! "Never mind me," said the Baptist; "listen to my message!"

Judgment might come at any moment. Already the ax was lying at the root of the tree, ready for use; if the tree did not bring forth good fruit it would be cut down and cast into the fire. John was fond of agricultural figures, and he drew another from a Palestinian custom at the wheat harvest. After the threshers have finished, they leave on the threshing-floor a pile composed of mixed wheat and chaff. Then comes the

winnower, with his "fan," or large winnowing shovel. With this he tosses the mixture into the wind, which sweeps away the light chaff, while the heavier grains of wheat fall back purified. So the Messiah would act, until the threshing-floor was thoroughly purged. On the righteous he would send a "baptism of Holy Spirit" which would transform them into sons of the Kingdom; but the unrighteous, unless they repented immediately, could expect only a baptism of destructive fire.

Sincere repentance, however, would surely be effective; here John touched a note of hope. And to make repentance sincere, he gave to each class of his hearers simple but incisive moral teaching adapted to their needs. The multitudes in general were warned that repentance was of no avail if they failed to help others and to relieve suffering when they had the means: "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise." The "publicans," or tax-collectors, a class notorious for their dishonesty, were adjured not to exceed their legal duties. And even the rough Jewish "soldiers"—*i.e.*, police [1]—were cautioned against the worst faults of police everywhere, violence and blackmail.

If his hearers accepted his teaching thus far, John believed he had a commission from God to do more than merely promise forgiveness. At this period of their history the Jews had developed a custom—not

[1] Not to be confused with the *Roman* soldiers, who could not have understood a word of John's preaching; his language was Aramaic.

yet universal—of subjecting converts from the Gentiles [1] to a rite of baptism. Its symbolism was obvious enough—a cleansing from the defilements of the past—but Jews never thought of their ceremonies as merely symbolic; rites to a Jew did not merely typify something, they actually accomplished something. So when John called his own ceremony "a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," he taught that those who submitted to this washing were—by special divine decree—really purged from the guilt of their past misdeeds.

That the Jews were already using baptism for the admission of Gentiles to Israel made the rite particularly appropriate for John's purposes, for an essential element of his message was a warning to the people not to trust in national privileges. "Begin not to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham to our father!' God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham! You members of the chosen race need purifying just as truly as if you were the despised heathen." So the rite involved a conscious self-humiliation, an acknowledgment of national shortcoming. In this way John lifted the Messianic hope out of mere nationalism into the realm of spiritual expectancy.

In practice John presumably followed closely the ritual for the baptism of Gentiles. The candidates took their stand waist-deep in the waters of Jordan, while John, perhaps, remained on the bank. Then each penitent, after confessing his iniquities, bent

[1] At the beginning of our era Judaism was an active missionary religion, something a little difficult for us to realize.

down to let the river flow over his head. When he stood up again, the ceremony was complete; he was assured that he could now safely face the Messiah at the coming judgment.

The training, however, did not stop there. While waiting for the Messiah to come, John insisted that his disciples must live as men in a dying world, rigorously, with arduous fastings and constant prayer. Such asceticism could never become popular. So, while we are told that great crowds went out to hear John and were admitted to his baptism, it does not appear that many of them continued long under such rigid discipline. Some there were, however, whom John schooled so thoroughly in his own unsparing way of life that they even refused to listen to Jesus when he in turn took up John's message. These disciples continued as a separate body, made some converts of their own, and for a while tried to rival Christianity. Eventually, driven into Mesopotamia, they settled there and have maintained a continuous existence to the present day, under the name "Mandæans." Their teaching has become corrupt and wild,[1] but they still reverence John the Baptist as the greatest of all God's messengers on earth.

[1] To the Mandæans the two greatest sins are dancing and wearing colored clothing.

## *Chapter IV*

### The Call of Jesus

THE immediate effect of the Baptist's preaching was to stir the whole nation with excited expectancy. In the temple, in the synagogues, in the market places, all were fired with fervent anticipation. The Messianic idea, always in the air, had become the most vital fact of the moment. All Palestine was soon engaged in serious self-examination. This was John's purpose. His appeal was nation-wide, "to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him." Now Israel's sense of racial solidarity was extreme; not only might the sins of a father affect his children, but the sin of a single unknown individual might defile a whole community.[1] It did not follow, therefore, that everyone who submitted to John's baptism had committed the sins which John denounced; he might have been entirely free from such failings, but his membership in the guilty nation was enough to demand what we might call a "race penitence." So when Jesus of Nazareth received the rite we must guard ourselves against assuming that he must have been conscious of personal shortcomings; the untroubled certainty with

[1] *e.g.*, Deuteronomy xxi: 1-9. A man has been murdered, but the murderer cannot be found, whereupon the elders of the place in question are to pray, "Forgive, O Lord, thy people Israel."

which he spoke of God and righteousness is proof of the contrary.

Of Jesus' life before he came to John we know next to nothing; between his birth and his baptism the records give us but one glimpse of him. This glimpse has, however, a high value of its own. At the age of twelve Joseph and the child's mother took him with them on a visit to Jerusalem, and "as they were returning, the boy Jesus tarried behind." An anxious search followed, until he was finally discovered in the temple, listening to the sages expound the Law. His mother reproved him gently, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." The reply is wonderfully characteristic of boyhood, which cannot understand how everyone does not know what the boy takes for granted. "Why—why did you have to search for me? Did you not *know* that I would be in my Father's house?" Even at the age of twelve there was present the unshakable consciousness of God's Fatherhood, which was to dominate the teaching of Jesus in later years.

During the life at Nazareth there must have been present, likewise, the instinctive certainty about God's will, the intuitive understanding of the true nature of righteousness. As a result there must have existed an ever profounder discontent with the teaching of the official expounders of Judaism, an ever growing indignation at their narrowness and self-satisfaction. Particularly hateful would have been the shallow nationalism of those who saw in the overthrow of the Romans

all that was needed to establish the Kingdom of God —with the consequent perpetual fanning of a hatred of Israel's enemies, and the justifying of this hatred as by God's command. Israel was in no condition so to plume itself. God's approaching judgment on the world was accepted everywhere; good—but how would Israel fare in this judgment? In the Baptist's message, therefore, Jesus heard his own thoughts echoed. John was indeed a prophet; to his revelation every Jew must submit. Accordingly, with the rest of the nation, Jesus offered himself for baptism in the river Jordan; and as he was baptized God's call came to him.

The story of this call is given us in a record of inner experiences, clothed in simple, concrete figures that make them clear to the simplest intelligence. Of course it is a dramatic recital, not a literal account. "Half the difficulties in the New Testament would vanish if men would only consent to translate Oriental poetry into bald, matter-of-fact, Western prose." We must bear this warning constantly in mind, and must not seek to interpret details in too rigid a fashion. But Jesus—the account can come only from him—leaves us in no doubt as to the essentials of the happenings.

"Straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending into [1] him." There was a blinding vision and a sudden realization of an inrush of power. "And a voice out of the heavens, 'Thou art my beloved Son,

[1] Not "upon."

in thee I am well pleased.' " Or, to translate more literally, "Thou art my Son, the Beloved; on thee have I set my choice." Three phrases for the same thing—"Thou art Messiah."

A sense of the difference between himself and other men had always been with Jesus; now he knew how great that difference was. He was chosen not alone to teach God's will, but to bring God's will to its consummation; not only to proclaim the coming of God's final Kingdom, but to found this Kingdom and to reign in it as its King.

So serious and solemn a revelation demanded solitude. "Straightway the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness." Jesus had to be alone. He must bend himself to the task of interpreting the message he had received, and the further messages he knew God would give him; he must think, and think hard, till he could be sure of God's purpose; think, and think hard, lest the spell of his recent experience pass away; concentrate on his task with purpose so intent as to transcend all ordinary interruptions, and even make him oblivious of the need of sleep and food. His period of solitude lasted, we are told, "forty days"—of course a round number; to an Oriental in practice the next number larger than "ten" is "forty."

In any case, however, the period was long enough to produce physical exhaustion, and outraged nature always takes her revenge. A body strung to the highest pitch of mental exaltation will invariably reassert

itself. As hunger's claims become insistent, spiritual ecstasy will wane. Then perplexities grow into doubts, and doubts grow into temptations; temptations that often arise out of the very ecstasy that has preceded them. In Jesus' case this was eminently true; the sharpness of his temptations lay in the fact that they were based in popular and attractive conceptions of what the Messiah should do.

The first temptation was the direct result of the hunger Jesus felt. Everyone held that the Messiah had arbitrary command over the powers of nature and that he might work any miracle he pleased. Why then, should not Jesus, as Messiah, use this gift to relieve his own distress? "If thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread." Why not? Why submit to discomfort when a miracle would give immediate relief? Why not be sensible and take the easiest way? Jesus' reply, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," gave the answer. God, who cares for the birds and the flowers in the orderly course of His government, cares all the more for them. Discomfort and pain, too, have their place in His plan and they are not to be evaded recklessly: to ask for a miracle merely to make ourselves more comfortable is to impeach God's wisdom. Everyone has felt the same temptation to shirk hardship; those who yield to it make up the cowards, the weaklings, the drug addicts of this world.

Then Jesus viewed the kingdoms of the world and

their glory as from a mountain top. Since he was Messiah, all these things might be his own. Was it not the common view that Israel was to conquer the world under the Messiah's surpassing generalship? So was not his best plan to unfurl the flag of revolt and summon the nation to battle? He had always detested such petty nationalism, to be sure, but was there room for pure idealism in this hard world of realities? Can anything be effected without some compromise of strict principle? "Why not half a loaf, rather than no bread?" Again, this is a temptation everyone has felt. Jesus' reply was curt and unambiguous: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Any lowering of the moral standard is, in essence, a worshiping of Satan.

Finally,[1] Jesus asked himself if he were really Messiah at all. Could he trust the call that God had given him, even though it came as the climax of a long series of experiences? Why not put the new conviction to a test? If he threw himself from the pinnacle of the temple, he could resolve all doubts. If he were not Messiah he would be destroyed, but he would be relieved of a fatal responsibility. Or else God's angels would bear him up, confirm his claim to his own mind and attest it beyond cavil to the nation; then he could go forward unhesitatingly. Probably every soul which has ever received a vocation to a trying work has been tempted in some similar way to demand a miracle that will remove hesitation. But it is enough if our

[1] St. Luke has the best order.

duty be made morally clear to us: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

The same temptations recurred all through Jesus' life—when Peter sought to hold him back on his last journey to Jerusalem; when the Pharisees asked him for a sign; when the taunting watchers on Calvary told him that if he would come down from the cross they would believe. These are temptations that in some form or other come to us all, but especially to every man who knows himself to be endowed with great gifts and understands that he should use them for God, yet feels himself constantly lured from the heights and asking whether he cannot seek an easier road and walk a smoother path.

As the result of the temptations Jesus saw clearly what sort of Messiah he must not be; not the king the crowd expected; not one who would stoop to popular conceptions and modify his own convictions; not one who would use force, even in a great crisis. To be sure, there were possibilities in the idea of Messiahship that may not yet have been cleared up, difficulties for whose solution he must trust to the future. But Jesus came out of the wilderness, sure that he must follow the path of truth and light, no matter where it led and no matter at what cost. God never meant to make life easy; he meant to make men great. God wants men of tremendous persistence and unflinching determination to live true to the best—men who will always do what truth and honor demand and close

the ear against any suggestion of compromise with divine principles and purposes.

So Jesus put resolutely away from him all thought of self-glorification. He began his work with a proclamation of God's will; about himself he refused to talk.

## *Chapter V*

### The Friendly Christ

JESUS was the world's great religious teacher, whatever else he was. We want to know what sort of teacher he was, and how and what he taught, before we ask other questions about him. Yet we want to know, also, what sort of man he was. And we want to know all the more because somehow we feel that the every-day person's conception of him has been colored by many false ideas, and the whole picture of Jesus has been distorted. Beyond question, Jesus lived a happy life. We forget this because his career ended in sacrifice and suffering. Christian theology has often made the Cross of Calvary the whole substance of his teaching. It was not always so. In earlier days the church was concerned with the thought of the incarnation—belief in the deity of the Lord, manifested in a perfect humanity. The first teachers could never forget that they had seen "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In our own day—an age of practical activity, rather than of speculative thought—the emphasis is more often placed on the human example of Christ and the need of following him as "The Way" as well as "The Truth and the Life." He is

. . . the Christ of our hearts and homes,
Our hopes and prayers and needs,
The Brother of want and blame,
The Lover of women and men,
With a love that puts to shame
All passions of mortal ken.

For centuries both these aspects of the great life were almost forgotten in the exclusive insistence upon the sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for the sin of the world—an emphasis so jealous as to minimize other truths and shift the center of Christian teaching. This meant that Jesus was rarely thought of save as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

In Holman Hunt's picture, "The Shadow of the Cross," the youthful Jesus and his mother are seen together in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. As the sun streams through the doorway, it casts upon the opposite wall, in the form of a cross, the shadow of his body and outstretched arms. Mary sees the shadow. In the agony of her posture there is suggested the idea that from his boyhood days the shadow of the cross always fell upon his path and darkened his life. There is truth, of course, in the picture—it is quite legitimate to let the imagination have play in reading thus early the significance of the later tragedy—but there is error also; the exaggerated emphasis which not only makes the cross the center of Christian teaching, but can hardly see anything in Christianity except the cross. We need not feel that the only purpose of Christ's coming was that he might die for men. Nor is it natural to think of his cross as if such an end to his

career were so inevitable that he himself apparently had no real choice about it.

That is not true. However dark the later days, the early years of his ministry were full of joy, gay and light-hearted in their freedom of friendship. The instinct is perfectly sound that made the Fourth Evangelist begin his description of Jesus' work with a story of a marriage. Somebody has said that no one would have dreamed of inviting John the Baptist to a wedding, but it was natural that Christ should be bidden to the feast; everyone knew that he would add to the joy of the occasion.

This criticism of John is perhaps overstrained; he was probably devoid of a sense of humor, but he was not necessarily a kill-joy. Unquestionably, however, there is real truth in the estimate of Christ's character. Sometimes the ecclesiastics felt that he was altogether too friendly. He mixed too much with all sorts and conditions of people; he received sinners and ate with them too frequently; he failed to rebuke the woman of the city who came to Simon's feast, and his host was distressed and perplexed at what seemed to him a lax and easy-going indifference; he permitted one of his own chosen apostles to gather an extraordinarily disreputable company of friends to meet him at dinner. It comes with something of a shock to read that some of his critics actually called him a glutton and a wine-bibber.

His public life began with the choice of a few intimate friends, and most of his public teaching was

given while he went with them on pilgrimages through Galilee—the north country from which most of his friends came. He rejoiced in the friendship of the Twelve. When questioned about their apparent lack of strict observance of the rules of fasting, he smiled and declared that they could not fast when they were as happy as friends of a newly-wed bridegroom.

Nor was his friendship one in which he gave all, and asked, and really needed, nothing. That destroys his humanness. He seems to have greatly needed friends, so thoroughly human was his hunger for their understanding, their affection, their sympathy and support. There is the desire for such understanding, when he asks of Peter, "Who do men say that I am? Who do you say that I am?" There is longing as well as reproach in the words, "Could ye not watch with me one hour?"

He needed friends—and he had them: Mary and Martha and Lazarus, in whose home affection always gave him a welcome opportunity for relaxation; Peter and James and John, who were a little closer to him than any of the rest of the Twelve; most of all the unnamed disciple—perhaps John, but nobody knows for certain—the best-beloved, into whose care he commended his mother in the hour of parting. Children were among his good friends. He loved them and they loved him. He watched them at play in the public square with amusement and delight, and afterward called attention to their songs. One of them he took on his knees as he talked to his disciples of the need

of the childlike spirit in the life of religion. Mothers brought their babies to him, that he might hold them in his arms and bless them.

He had a wonderful capacity for making friends with all sorts of people. Nicodemus took his courage in his hands to go for a quiet talk with him, even though he went after dark. The woman of Samaria involuntarily opened her heart to him. There were even women of Herod's court in the groups which gathered to hear him and afterward joined his company. A wealthy citizen of Jerusalem came forward in the tragic hour of his death to proclaim his friendship and offer a place in which to bury the body of the defeated leader.

There are several stories of the way in which Jesus made friends, but none more full of color than the account of his winning of Zacchæus. Zacchæus was a profiteer; more than that, a grafting governmental profiteer. He was head of the department for the collection of internal revenue in the district of Jericho, and like other tax-gatherers had lined his pockets with commissions, not all of them honestly levied. He was despised by the people. Yet he was not altogether bad, or he would not have been so curious to see, on his way through Jericho, the man who was thought to be the Messiah. Because he was little of stature, Zacchæus climbed up into a tree to look over the heads of the crowd and see Jesus. He was really a ridiculous object—one may suppose that the boys in the crowd tittered, the girls giggled, the adults (who had paid their taxes) sneered at him.

Then Jesus passed by and looked up, and seeing him said, "Hurry now, Zacchæus, and come down; I must be your guest at dinner today." No wonder Zacchæus was a changed man. "Here I am," he thought, "a miserable money-grubber, heaping up a fortune without much thought of how I get the money or what I shall do with it. But this man believes in me. Here before the crowd he asks me to be his host. Today, then, I make a new start. Half of my fortune I will give away in charity and every false collection of taxes I will pay back four times over. This man trusts me and makes me his friend, and I mean to live up to his expectations."

Another anecdote which tells of a rich young man who came to Jesus adds that "when he saw him, Jesus loved him." It was of this man that the extraordinary demand was made, "Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor." This unusual injunction was an offer of close friendship, with appointment to apostleship; the refusal is indeed the record of "a great rejection."

The twelve companions and their Master, and possibly some of the others with them on occasions, went through the fields and along the friendly road, while he talked with them and now and then taught those who gathered about the little company. As he taught, God and goodness became very real.

And so those happy companions on the friendly road thought about God, in the peace of the simple life, as their Master told story after story, each with its spe-

cial lesson, thus gradually making them understand the whole body of his teaching, slowly bringing them to think of God as Friend and Father, even as he himself was Friend and Brother.

## *Chapter VI*

### The Ideal of Righteousness

WHAT did Jesus teach? The best way to answer this question is to examine concrete examples of the teaching itself. As a starting-point there is nothing better than what we call the "Sermon on the Mount," which fills the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of our First Gospel.

To be sure, this is a compend of Jesus' most important sayings on the nature of righteousness rather than a "sermon" in our sense of the word. We know this for at least one reason—and a very obvious one—it is too closely packed to be easily followed. Even for us, who are familiar with its contents, to read it through with careful attention is a serious task. If such an address were delivered to persons who had never heard the teaching before, we can hardly imagine their taking in its meaning; the very effort at concentration of thought would have led to imperfect apprehension. Rather, this "sermon" is made up entirely of "texts" or "seed thoughts," each of which must have been amplified and illustrated at length when first spoken.

This does not mean that addresses [1] were not delivered to hearers who gathered around Jesus on a hillside; there may have been a hundred such addresses

[1] Hardly "sermons" as we know "sermons."

in many different places. Portions of the so-called "Sermon on the Mount" were doubtless explained and discussed over and over again on such occasions. It may even be that when Jesus finally selected the Twelve, he delivered to them a formal recapitulation of his teaching in a form not unlike our passage. Such questions, while interesting, are not really important; as a compend or recapitulation, the "Sermon" is much more significant to us than a verbatim record of any single discourse.

We should notice, in the first place, that our passage has a very definite structure. A theme [1] is balanced by a summary; [2] the statement, "Think not I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy but to fulfil," is summed up in the words, "All things, therefore, whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this *is* the law and the prophets." All that stands in between these two passages is a development of the theme in one special aspect after another; teaching about sin, murder, adultery, perjury, retaliation, and so on. Before the statement of the theme we have a prologue—the Beatitudes—which describes the conditions of blessedness. And after the summary comes an epilogue, which contrasts the results of true teaching and of false; no religion will endure that is not founded on a solid foundation of righteousness.

When we realize that the whole "Sermon" is built up on a single theme, we can understand its general

[1] St. Matthew v: 17. [2] St. Matthew vii: 12.

purpose much more readily. "I came not to destroy the law or the prophets; I came to fulfil them—to bring out the true fullness of their meaning." Consequently, the "Sermon on the Mount" is not at all a contrast between "the old law and the new," if by the "old" law we mean the law of the Old Testament. The purpose of the Sermon is explicitly stated to be an affirming of the Old Testament law in its deepest sense. For instance, when God said, "Thou shalt not kill," he did not mean to prohibit only the murderous act and to permit murderous thoughts and words; God may judge some exhibitions of anger as severely as men may judge some murders. Nor did God mean that a murderer can be absolved of his guilt merely by paying the legal penalty; to say, "Whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment" [1] is entirely inadequate. In other words, the current Jewish teachers, by treating God's law as lawyers treat human laws, had perverted it; by fixing their attention microscopically on the letter they had missed the spirit. So the contrast drawn in the Sermon on the Mount is between the traditional false interpretation of the law and the true meaning of the law; "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

To take another example, one special aspect of the theme is given in the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy." But there is no such precept in the Old Testament. "Love thy neighbor"

[1] *i.e.*, of the human judges who tried such cases.

is most assuredly there, but the second part of the proposition is a lawyer's deduction from the first,[1] and the combination is the form in which the Old Testament was currently taught. Moreover, once converted into a lawyer's statement, every phrase in the sentence was subjected to further legal analysis. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor" was read as "Thou shalt love thy *neighbor*," with the resulting conclusion, "If a man is not your neighbor, you are not legally bound to love him; in fact, under some circumstances your duty may be to hate him." So, "Who is my neighbor?" became a problem for the learned experts to solve. In fact, on one momentous occasion, one of these experts put this question to Jesus, possibly hoping for more definite light himself. Jesus' reply was the parable of the Good Samaritan, with the moral, "My neighbor is the man who is near me." [2]

The phrase, "the contrast between the old law and the new," is false from another angle. To call Jesus' teaching "the new law" gives at once a wrong impression of the way in which he taught. He does not lay down "laws" at all; the legalistic principle is the very principle he condemned in his exploration of the Old Testament precepts for their vital truth. Jesus gives principles of conduct. He does not prescribe rules, he describes a character; he is interested in showing his

[1] Aided, perhaps, by some of the cruder Old Testament denunciations of Israel's foes.

[2] It should be stated explicitly, however, that in the Judaism of later centuries many crudities of the early first century were discarded by the sound sense of the Jewish scholars.

disciples what they must be, rather than what they must do. The official teachers of the law laid emphasis on outward observances; he puts the emphasis on inner motives. They were content with obedience to statutory enactments, and asked nothing better than a severely strict acquiescence in the standards laid down by the traditionalists of the time; he asks a willingness to go over and beyond the most that men may demand. The official teachers could be content if persuaded that they had fulfilled the rules; he asks for that "divine discontent" which strives for perfection and can never be satisfied until it has been attained. "Be ye therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

To take, now, the special aspects of the theme of righteousness as they occur in the Sermon on the Mount. On the first, anger, something has been said already: God may judge anger as seriously as men judge murder. Similarly, angry words may bear the guilt which men attached to such grievous crimes as false prophecy, which were reserved for the "council" or Great Sanhedrin; reckless abuse[1] may be as sinful as men deemed the abhorrent sins that were punished by burning in the Valley of Hinnom.[2] Since anger could be so culpable, even the most sacred acts of worship give way to the duty of reconciliation.

Again, the Seventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," does not merely forbid an impure

[1] We do not know the exact force of either "Raca" or "Thou fool," but the general sense must be about as here assumed.

[2] Near Jerusalem to the southwest. "The hell of fire" is an inappropriate translation in this passage.

act; it condemns impure thoughts just as truly. Consequently, if anyone think his nature is one that condones self-indulgence, he should undeceive himself. Such a nature must be reformed at any cost. "If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out and cast it from thee."

When a man marries he assumes a permanent responsibility, which is not voided if he finds himself disappointed in his wife. Nothing will excuse failure of his patience or forbearance. She, too, owes him the same duty. So, if he puts her away and she marries again,[1] he becomes guilty of her sin in addition to his own: "he causes her to commit adultery."

Failure to speak the truth cannot be excused by a casuistry that teaches that some formulas are truth-compelling while others are not. If a man's simple "yes" or "no" is untrustworthy, then something is wrong somewhere.

The Old Testament law provided certain punishments for criminal offenses; in some quarters this was interpreted to mean that an injured man had a moral right to demand the infliction of these penalties; a doctrine that taught that revenge up to a certain point was permissible. On the contrary, Jesus declares, revengeful desire is wrong under every circumstance. In so far as the individual by himself is concerned, all selfish insistence on personal or property rights is sinful.

The command to love is utterly unrestricted; in fact, obedience to this command is meritorious only when

[1] Under Jewish conditions assumed as inevitable.

love is not prompted by any natural interest. God scatters His benefits on evil and good alike, and the true child of God takes his Father as his pattern.

In the strictly religious sense of the word, the Jews divided "righteousness" into three acts—almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. All three should be regarded purely as matters between the individual soul and God. When used for any other purpose—such as to win men's praise—they lose all their inner value. And what is true of these observances is equally true of the use of wealth—when used solely for the purposes of this present age it may, at the best, be merely futile, consumed by moth and rust; when used to serve God's cause, it becomes a permanent and enduring possession. So man's chief need in spiritual things is a singleness of purpose that sees its aim clearly and unwaveringly; otherwise he will be like a servant attempting the impossible task of serving two masters at once.

After a digression on freedom from present care, the Sermon returns to the concrete illustration of its theme with the words, "Judge not." For in carping criticism of others there is a fatal likelihood of sinking into unabashed selfishness; the contemplation of other people's shortcomings is the most comforting method of distracting attention from our own, and there is no greater sin against love. Hence this fault is a "beam" compared to which most other errors are merely "motes."

And so [1] the Sermon passes to its summary, which

[1] After another short digression.

condenses all the special application into a perfect formula: "All things, therefore, whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them. This is the true meaning of the law and the prophets."

To use a modern phrase, the Sermon on the Mount is the most comprehensive summary of Jesus' "ethics." Consequently, it may be well to note, once more, the manner in which the ethical teaching is given. We have no enunciation of legalistic commands, we have the setting forth of principles; if we take Jesus' words and try to turn them into humdrum legalities, they may become absurd. For example: "When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father who is in secret." If this were interpreted legalistically and literally, it would prohibit public worship completely. But in that case it would condemn first of all Jesus himself, for he was constant in his attendance at the synagogues and he reverenced the temple deeply.

We should note, moreover—and this is very important—that in every concrete instance each single principle is analyzed by itself, that for the moment each such principle is considered in complete isolation. What is the true nature of gentleness? Of purity? Of truthfulness? Each virtue is taken singly, as if for the purposes of the analysis it were the only virtue in the world. In precisely the same way, individuals, too, are considered in entire independence of other individuals. When Jesus said, "If a man smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also," the indi-

vidual addressed is isolated from the rest of the race; the only effect considered is the effect on him. If he willingly turn the other cheek, he may be certain that he cherishes no revenge; this is the sole point directly at issue.

Now, it may be urged very truly, life is not like that. Life almost never offers a problem into which only a single motive can enter, and perhaps never offers a problem that concerns exclusively a single agent. The moment we attempt to act, complications occur. If I am struck on the cheek, I must free myself from all desire of revenge; yes, but I also owe a duty of love to the offender; I must do him all the good in my power. So I am bound to ask myself, Shall I in every instance do him the most good by letting him believe that he may injure others recklessly and with impunity? It may be that my gentleness may be the best corrective I can offer him, *but Jesus does not say so.* All Jesus does in stating this principle is to consider the injured person, and to consider the injured person only as a man who may think he has a claim to revenge.

Or perhaps a third party is injured while I am a bystander; what then? Here, again, we must mark attentively what Jesus does *not* say. He does not say, "If a man smite a child on its right cheek, let him smite the child on the other cheek also!" Nor does he say, "If a man take the widow's bread, let him take the orphan's also!" When we try to word his principle legalistically in such forms as these, we

realize instantly the absurdity of our interpretation of the teaching as precepts.

In other words, while life's problems are usually concerned with a conflict of motives and duties, the Sermon on the Mount is concerned with the final principles from which action arises. The simple problem must precede the more complex; before we can deal with conflicting elements, we must first be clear as to the elements taken separately. The purpose of the Sermon is to make the simple problem clear in each case; to secure the singleness of the spiritual "eye," without which the whole body will be full of darkness. The individual must learn to examine and analyze his own basic motives. When he is assured of their purity—and only then—he may truly feel that he is beginning to act as a moral being. Then, when the single motives have been purified, the task of combining motives will be vastly easier. But for the various combinations there can be no rigid rules; each instance must be examined on its own merits.

That is why Jesus does not give precise, definite, specific laws of life. He leaves us to do something for ourselves. He would have us do hard work in the way of character-building. In each of his sayings there is a principle to be discovered and applied: to cultivate the spirit of abounding generosity; to control acquisitiveness; to show magnanimity and large-heartedness; to curb personal resentment. The language used is Oriental, vivid, paradoxical, aphoristic, epigrammatic, parabolic. It is for us to discover the

kernel of truth in the parable or paradox and apply it in the varying circumstances of life. Is not that the way in which truth is best made vivid? The ideal teacher is the one who makes you *see the idea*, not the one who loses the thought in a maze of detail, much less in a cautious catalogue of exceptions.

It is a splendid and inspiring task, in the world in which we live and with the tasks we have to do and the temptations we must overcome, to try to read "the mind of the Master" in the effort to discover what Jesus Christ would expect of us. Only a weakling would wish a map of duty, with all the directions plainly printed. Christ's call is to live unselfishly, to give gladly and generously, to break through the tyranny of class, and reverse the usual order of life, and think more of others than of self. It is our part to ask, "When?" and "Where?" and "Why?"

It is this that makes the teaching of Jesus universal. No new generation has improved upon it and no new civilization will supplant it. Conditions change and the application varies, but the principles abide. Every age has found its highest ideal embodied in Christ. He has been the perfect truth to ages of philosophic thought; the highest example to an age of discipline; the quickener of the dead letter to an age of ecclesiastical reform; the example of service to our own practical age; the awakener of conscience to a generation which faces the social problem; the hope of those who seek peace for the world.

And, then, marvel of marvels: he *was* all that he taught. Will his teaching work? Look at him and

we see that it *has* worked. Other teachers have had beautiful thoughts; the higher their ideals, the sharper the contrast with their actions and the more evident the difference between what men say and what they are. Jesus Christ has always been the living embodiment of every word of his teaching.

## *Chapter VII*

### The Christian Ethic

WHAT reason does Jesus give for the ideal of righteousness he sets forth? In other words—and to use modern terminology—what is the basis of his ethic? The answer is best stated in his own words: "That ye may become [1] sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." In one sense, no doubt, every human being may be said to be a child of God—and yet every human being should likewise endeavor to *become* a child of God. Mere natural relationship does not by itself contribute much to family life. Unless there is a real likeness of nature, a true identification of interests between children and their parents, family bonds tend to become meaningless and irksome. So Jesus' ethical motive may be summed up in the phrase, "Imitation of God"; an imitation of a God whose activity is manifest in care of His creatures.[2] Consequently the two "Great Commandments," love of God and love of neighbor, are in reality only one, because love

[1] Not "be."

[2] It may be said here, in passing, that Jesus was perfectly aware—no one more so—that nature is not simply benevolent, and that pain, destruction, and death are as familiar as happiness and health. But, in the wide sweep of his vision, he saw that even pain and death can be included in a beneficent purpose. Compare Chapter XI.

of such a God produces love of neighbor irresistibly.

It follows, likewise, that a Christian ethic is essentially an ethic of activity, for the righteousness that Jesus taught issues always in positive well-doing. There are two forms of the Golden Rule, one of them negative, reading: "Whatever is displeasing to thyself, do not to thy neighbor"; and the other positive, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them." Only the latter was taught by Jesus. Superficially there may not seem to be much difference between the two forms, and yet they are based on utterly different outlooks. The negative Golden Rule can be perfectly fulfilled in solitude; the positive Golden Rule demands social contacts. A man who harms no one may be a respectable member of the community, but he is of no great help to the community. It is not until each neighbor is thought of as offering an opportunity for service that the Christian ideal is reached.

From this standpoint we see the real meaning of Jesus' famous words: "Why callest thou me good? None is good save one, even God." Goodness consists in activity, but only God is perfectly active, therefore, only God is perfectly good. So no human being can be "good" in the full sense of the word, for human activity—and hence human goodness—is limited at every turn. Consequently, even Jesus, speaking humanly, felt obliged to disclaim perfect and complete goodness, that he might make his questioner think of the divine standard in the only way possible for him to think of it.

In view of this, to ask whether or not Jesus' ethic is a "social" ethic would show a singular lack of perception; his ethic finds its very essence in social relations. Yet we look to him in vain for any conceptions of a social outlook that runs parallel with some of today's legislation. He cared little for law as law. One finds nothing in his teaching to indicate that he would be sympathetic to the idea that the paramount duty of the church is the formulating of programs, the engineering of particular schemes of reforms, the utilization of Christian organization as a political force, or the employment of his ministers as lobbyists and propagandist agents in legislative halls. The realm in which Jesus was interested—of this more fully later—and the sphere of the state are different; we must "render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's and unto God the things which are God's."

Indeed, instead of adjudicating in social matters, Jesus showed a singular dislike for interference in particular cases. When one man with a grievance came to him, desiring his help in compelling a division of family property—the rabbis were always willing to act in such instances—Jesus' first words were an expression of searching insight into the man's soul. It was not so much a matter of zeal for justice that brought the man in such a hurry; it was covetous anxiety to get all he could. "Man, who made me a judge or divider over you? Take heed and beware of covetousness!"

Nor was Jesus, in the strict sense of the word, a social reformer. Instead of preaching social revolu-

tion, he urged upon all deep searching of the heart, to discover the near-at-hand sin. He did, indeed, speak in scathing denunciation of the sins of the wealthier classes, but he did not go to the opposite extreme of flattering the masses. Quite the contrary. "If any man would go to law with thee and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also"; desperate clinging to property rights is, no doubt, blind selfishness. But, just as truly, "Whosoever shall impress thee to carry a burden for one mile, go with him two"; labor in its own way may be as self-centered as capital. Nothing is more important for the Christian social worker to remember. Social partisanship in the church or among the clergy today does not really represent Christ, and in the end will not win the workers. The minister is in the best possible position to be a mediator between the rich and the poor. Not being overrich himself, and yet rarely falling below a "decent poverty," he has an unusual opportunity to break down class prejudice and create a general and genuine social consciousness.

Nor did Jesus take the slightest interest in the social question from the standpoint of legislation. Such legislation in his day actually existed and in abundance, for the question of justice to the poor concerned the rabbis deeply; this is, in fact, a constant theme in the Old Testament, and the Jewish experts were perpetually enlarging and safeguarding what the Old Testament laws decreed. Jesus, however, here as everywhere else, went deeper than laws could possibly go, in order to arouse a new social conscience, because

he saw that this of itself would alone solve all problems.

Indeed, the strength of his influence lies, in large measure, in this very fact, that he declined to advocate specific reforms; he did something better, he set forth principles which made reform inevitable. Had he been a legislator dealing specifically with local conditions of his own day, his teaching would have been of little value when that day had passed. His method was different; it was to create the sense of individual responsibility.

And today the supreme social duty of the church and of churches is the same: the kindling of brotherly understanding and confidence and the spreading of it as by contagion. Men may conscientiously differ as to methods of social reform, though they are equally concerned about the evils which they seek to eradicate. Remembrance of this would save us many sorrows in our Christian crusading in America today! There is a clear distinction between moral teaching and the particular social, industrial, economic, or legislative methods by which the moral teaching may be applied to particular problems.

Christ's method has one obvious advantage. The real cause of social disorder, economic evil, industrial injustice, intemperance, poverty, crime—the real cause is found in the passions and ambitions of individual men. We shall never find a system which can guarantee social betterment. No law can be framed which unscrupulous men cannot evade; no social organiza-

tion can be devised which they cannot in some way utilize to their own ends.

Christ, therefore, worked from within to change individuals. He showed that "the greatest contribution to the social movement is the contribution of a regenerated personality." "What we need is not so much a change of method as a change of heart." Therefore, out of all the disagreements and uncertainties today as to the duty of Christ's church, this fundamental statement may be accepted: Wherever and whenever a moral question arises, it is the function of the church as a corporate society, the kingdom of organized righteousness, to establish the principles upon which the question shall be settled; but it must be left to individuals, acting singly in their capacity as citizens, or united in organizations, to see that right principles are duly expressed in specific reforms.

Perhaps, if he were speaking again today, Jesus would remind us—does he not, in fact, remind us?—that just as the problem of marriage is a matter of right attitude, so it is with social reform. In his teaching about marriage he came closer, apparently, to specific legislative interpretation than in any other moral decision, perhaps because it is of the essence of marriage that there should be reasonable certainty of its permanence; otherwise, at the first serious difference, a break-up would be inevitable. The fact that the life of the family is a life of moral training, a matter of "give and take," a problem in readjustments, an education in unselfishness—all this must be understood. And this may best be practiced, when the injunction

is clear that we must try, as a family, to preserve family happiness at any cost. We must not be allowed to surrender to the first difficulty, with the thought in the back of our heads that there is always the opportunity of another chance.

The problems of social life and the industrial order can be solved only when the same spirit is carried into the larger relationship. "All ye are brethren" must be the motto of every effort. The world is a larger family—an immense organization for mutual help—and you must do your part in keeping the family together. This is what Jesus taught; and it was because, in the first centuries, the church of Christ appeared as a brotherly society, making the welfare of its members its first and controlling principle, that it made such tremendous strides in the Roman world.

It can make great progress now; but progress will come only as we go "back to Jesus" and seek to learn what his will really is, for his church, for men, for the world. Nowhere will the study be more fascinating and fruitful than in the effort to learn more about the Kingdom, especially in the larger problems of national and of social life. Must a nation be "as good as a good man"? How can a national enemy be forgiven after the same rule as that which commands the curbing of personal resentment? Can the same law hold, when the rights and safety of others must be considered, as well as our own freedom from injury? How can different loyalties be harmonized?

Answers are bound to be different, but truth will prevail when the real effort is to catch the spirit of



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Christ, not merely to turn his precepts into laws or constitutions or treaties. We can hardly acquiesce, however, in anything other than the spirit of adventure. In England, the Foreign Minister of a Labor Cabinet was questioned as to his policy. "We shall try to follow the Golden Rule," he said; whereupon a sturdy representative of the old order exclaimed, "Then God help us." And the answer came back, in a flash, "We think He will."

## *Chapter VIII*

### The Heart of the Gospel

MODERN writers often speak of the Sermon on the Mount as "the heart of Jesus' Gospel." They are mistaken. The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is an utterly vital part of Jesus' message; it is the "rock" on which every spiritual house must be built. But the Sermon on the Mount is not "gospel."

The reason is plain. "Gospel" means "good news," but the tremendous ethical demands of the Sermon are not good news—if nothing follows. If these demands are to be understood simply as the conditions which everyone must fulfill before he can hope for salvation, they are the worst of all possible news, for they ask so much that they leave us in despair. The external legalism, which Jesus condemned, was difficult, but at least it was within the reach of *somebody*. The zealots, who devoted all their energies to obeying the law, might at times boast without falsehood that they had succeeded in their aim; when the Pharisee in the parable asserts that he has even gone beyond the requirements of the law, he is supposed to be speaking the exact and literal truth. But who can claim to have lived up to the standard set forth in the Sermon on the Mount? So it is not to the Sermon we look for "good news."

Where, then, are we to find this Gospel, or "good news"?

When we turn to the records of Jesus' teaching, we see a curious picture. On the one hand he is described as teaching this splendid but drastic ethical ideal, and preaching it as the only ideal worthy of a follower of God. We hear him denouncing the professionally pious classes of his day as men whose righteousness must be exceeded by all who hope to enter the Kingdom. On the other hand, we see him mingling on the most friendly terms with the despised and outcast "publicans and sinners," men and women whose moral achievements, by any possible measure, were far below those of the Pharisees. He even goes so far as to declare forgiveness of sins for individuals who appear to us to have made but a slight beginning in the way of righteousness. How are these two seemingly discrepant sides of the picture to be reconciled?

The answer is found in the title Jesus uses for God: he always called God "Father." We have seen already how he based all direction for moral endeavor on this name, but how did he understand God's Fatherhood as expressing a *religious* relationship? And how are we to interpret the corresponding term, "child," in the same relationship? "Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Just what does "as a little child" mean?

In the first place, "as a little child" does *not* mean that we must accept beliefs with what we nowadays call a "childlike faith." This phrase, in modern

parlance, usually denotes a credulity that accepts a statement purely on external authority, without seeking any further reasons for the belief, and without asking whether the belief is possible or not. A little child believes in Santa Claus without reasoning about the matter at all; are we to believe in God and His promises in the same way? To ask this question is to answer it. Such faith is meritorious only in a child. There are heights, of course, to which the mind cannot reach, heights which we can scale only by a venture of faith; but this faith is not "childlike."

Nor is the childlike quality "humility," although humility is an important element. Children, after all, are not very humble beings; in some respects, childhood is the most egotistic period of life. In fact, a child's innocent pride in its achievements is one of its most charming qualities; a quality that we should miss sadly if it were absent.

If we really seek the answer to our question, we can find it simply by looking at a child; the perfection of Jesus' comparisons lies in the fact that they are self-evident, if we only know the thing he is talking about. The quality that makes a child attractive is something everyone knows, even though it is perhaps difficult to state in a precise formula. Generally speaking, however, we may sum up this quality as "affectionate naturalness." There is no bargaining in the child-father relationship. As long as this relationship is kept intact—we must never forget that unworthiness on either side may spoil it—the father's love is not measured by counting up the acts of service the

child has performed each day; nor does the child expect to earn its father's care by its own scrupulous obedience. If a child should say, "I have done everything you asked me to do, and therefore I claim from you in return my food and clothing," the genuine relationship would be wrecked. Or when one hears—as, unfortunately, now and then one does hear—an older child say, "I have done my full legal duty to my parents," the impression is one of heartlessness, a consciousness that this child, at any rate, does not know what real duty is. In other words, the legal quality, which, according to Jesus' teaching, spoils righteousness, spoils just as thoroughly the true religious relationship to God.

Of course, God is wholly desirous to do his part in this relationship. The parable of the prodigal son tells the story in the simplest and most familiar terms. In this story Jesus, with his eye open as always to the actualities of life, was careful not to select a father extraordinarily wise or unusually generous. He chose for his illustration an ordinary parent of normal qualities, good-hearted but not inclined to trouble himself overmuch about his children. His older son is pictured as possessing the plodding fidelity of a heart naturally but uninspiringly responsive to duty. His obedience is simply taken for granted by the father, quite unmindful of youth's need of relaxation and diversion; in consequence, the boy brooded over what seemed to him to be neglect. The younger son is a wayward, impatient, "heady" young man, who, tired

of the humdrum life of the home, took his inheritance and left to go "on his own" in the venturesome life of the larger world. The father permitted him to depart with his pockets full and without anyone to guide him. Naturally enough there happened what too often happens in such cases: the boy made a tragic failure of the experiment, sank into debauchery, and vanished, to the father's great distress. Humble and penitent, the son finally returned, willing to begin again on the lowest round of life's ladder, to find a father now shocked into realization of his loss and ready to receive him with open arms. Nothing was too excessive to express the joy of finding the lost child once more: festal garments, the best food procurable, and even hired entertainers to sing and dance for him.

No one, apparently, took the trouble to notify the older son, who, smarting under the sense of long injustice, thought that this lavish expenditure on the prodigal was the last straw. His attitude was not charitable, perhaps, but it certainly was natural. His anger is overcome, however, by the first words of love which, perhaps, the father had addressed to him in years, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine." The father suddenly realizes that here, too, is a boy who is priceless to him.

If, then, an earthly father could be so awakened to the value of his children, how much more is God unceasingly alive to the worth of His creatures! The soul that has wandered far from God in devious ways need never fear to return; God will come far more than halfway. And faithful, patient souls, who work

on day after day in a life that seems dreary and monotonous, must never for a moment let themselves think that God is unmindful of them.[1]

With the same general moral we have two other parables, so simple that they require no explanation; they need only be told:

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness,[2] and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

"Or what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost."

To Orientals such occurrences would be as familiar as the day—the happy shepherd, carrying the sheep and singing songs of joy at the top of his lungs; exuberant women calling in all the neighbors for a joy-feast. "Even so there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"—and

[1] Of course this is a secondary element in the story, but an element which is certainly present. The father's words of praise and affection for the older son debar any attempt to treat this boy as merely reprehensible and heartless.

[2] These sheep are supposed to be in a place of safety.

the One who rejoices in the presence of the angels is none other than God Himself.

We must not, of course, try to extract from these stories more than they are meant to teach; they are not concerned with our part in winning forgiveness, but with God's. If we attempt to define, for instance, just what made the prodigal's repentance acceptable, we go beyond the lesson in the parable. The stories tell us simply: If any true relationship can be established between the Father and one of His children, God is passionately anxious to receive that child. And it is from this truth alone that further conclusions should be drawn.

This truth, indeed, tells us all that we need know. Our part is to respond to God's offer as a child accepts its father's love, gratefully, without attempting to make terms or to plead its own achievements as compelling God's favor. This was the Pharisee's error as he blandly recited the catalogue of his own virtues: "I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican who stands near me. *I* fast twice in the week;[1] *I* give tithes of everything[2] I get." The man felt that he had nothing to regret, nothing to desire, no aim he had not reached; he had left nothing undone which he ought to have done, he had even gone beyond the legal requirements; he was perfectly satisfied with himself. How could such a man be made to feel the real meaning of God's

[1] By the Old Testament law fasting was obligatory only once a year, on the Day of Atonement.

[2] By the Old Testament law tithes were obligatory only on agricultural produce raised in Palestine.

Fatherhood? He was thinking of himself as dealing with God on—as it were—equal terms, he doing his part while God did His. And he pictured the two parties to the contract as congratulating each other on their mutual achievements!

This is why Jesus speaks with an extreme of severity of those who were the "good people" of their own day, who were seen constantly at prayer, were never-failing in the observance of religious rites, were leaders in the life of their church, and were pointed out as deserving of all praise and respect. In general, he always saw latent possibilities of good where they were least expected; he seemed, instinctively, to draw the best out of people; he had the greatest patience with the most degraded type of sinners, and never uttered a word that would lead them to despise themselves or to despair of themselves. But for the pharisaical spirit his language was that of stern denunciation, even of scornful derision. In the Pharisee there was nothing to which Jesus could appeal. Just so long as the voice of conscience has not been wholly silenced, so long as there is an occasional sting of self-condemnation, so long as there are some restless longings, love may draw out the better self; but all these were absent from the Pharisee, and therefore the only possible thing was to sting him with contempt, in the hope that at last he might be stung into self-contempt.[1] All this we see in the parable, in one short, sharp sentence which tells the whole story in a line.

[1] There were perhaps six thousand Pharisees in Jesus' day. Of course his condemnations were not meant to apply to every individual in the entire group.

Acceptance of the demands of the Sermon on the Mount would have wrecked pharisaic self-superiority beyond recovery. Knowledge of the real nature of God's righteousness would have been utterly humbling. To see a vision of an ideal beyond human attainment, with new vistas constantly opening, with ever fresh possibilities of still more exalted advance, would have made him realize how petty his progress beyond the despised publican had been. He would have seen that all his boasted attainments had given and could give him no claim on God; that his whole hope was to approach God as a penitent child approaches its father knowing that it cannot make reparation for its faults, but trusting to the father's love for pardon. This is why the publican, with the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner," could go down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee.

And this is why the two sides of the picture of Jesus' teaching—the drastic demand for righteousness and the message of a merciful Father—are not discrepant but supplementary; both sides are needed for the whole truth.

## *Chapter IX*

### The Way of Progress

JESUS was never satisfied to preach the doctrine of God's forgiveness in generalities; he was constantly applying the doctrine to individual cases.

On one occasion a Pharisee asked Jesus to eat with him. This particular Pharisee was trying to make up his own mind about the character of the new teacher. The meal progressed in the usual Jewish fashion. The table was placed in the middle of the room, with couches around it; on these the guests reclined, supporting themselves on the left elbow, while the unsandaled feet rested on the edge of the couch toward the walls of the room. Whatever were the faults of the Pharisees, parsimony to the poor was not one of them; they gave alms lavishly and on all occasions.[1] It was no unusual thing, in fact, to open the house door while a meal was in progress and to allow the entrance of beggars; they were permitted to stand behind the couches, and portions of food were passed or tossed to them. Consequently there was nothing strange in the appearance of a woman, described sufficiently as a "sinner," who took her place behind Jesus.

Her actions, however, proved to be extraordinary.

[1] At times much too ostentatiously, "sounding a trumpet."

With utter lack of self-consciousness, careless of the crowd, anxious only to show her gratitude, she broke a box of ointment, anointed the Master's feet, washed them with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. The Pharisee, who knew the woman, stared in dumb amazement. We can see him, untouched, cold, critical, plainly annoyed at the unseemliness of such a "scene" in his own house. He was now quite sure that this teacher was no prophet; if he were, "he would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him"; a properly righteous man might give her alms, but he would shrink from her touch as a pollution. It was then that Jesus said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

Jesus "turned" to the woman—looked first at Simon and then down at the penitent—and the parable followed with its moral of the largeness of pardon and blessing: "A certain lender had two debtors: the one owed him five hundred shillings, the other fifty. When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Which of them, therefore, will love him most?" The woman had borne a heavy load of sin, indeed, and it had been forgiven her; no wonder that she loved much—and no wonder that Jesus was willing to accept outward tokens of love from this child who had returned to the Father.

There was nothing lax about this attitude. If the right relation exists between the child and the father, the child is certain to progress toward the father's ideals; slowly, perhaps, at first, but none the less surely. What counts is not so much our actual achieve-

ment at any given moment as the direction of our progress; what we are becoming is vastly more important than what we are. At the moment, beyond question, the woman was on a lower moral level than Simon, but also at the moment she possessed far greater possibilities for the future. Her path toward God was not blocked off by spiritual pride.

Of course Jesus' teaching is capable of perversion and of great abuse; the child-father illustration may be pushed so far that it no longer represents his mind. The parallel between the faults of childhood and the sins of maturity is necessarily imperfect. The calculating deliberation with which adults act, for one thing, may give to their deeds a quality childhood never knows. For another, there is a class of people to whom religion seems narrow and belittling as compared with the broader ways of the world, who are in no way conscious of the need of divine grace, who see no reason for self-discipline, but think it rather fine and free and splendid to follow any urge and thus avoid morbid self-consciousness.[1] One can quite see how the story of the prodigal would make a wholly false appeal to an age that is only too glad to think of God—if it thinks of him at all—as a loose, lax, kindly, benevolent Deity, who regards sin as an unlucky misstep or mistake easily overlooked. Ours is an age that conceives God's Fatherhood as a smiling indulgence which would never dream of punishing any

[1] In recent times consoling themselves with the psychological argument that they are escaping "repressions."

child, no matter how serious its faults.[1] Jesus' teaching of the Father's willingness to welcome the returning sinner may thus be made, after a fashion, a justification of the right to sin. The parable of the prodigal has been interpreted as if it excused professional prodigals, who positively enjoy riotous living and expect "fatted calves" of welcome when they weary of other pleasures. The sins of the Pharisees are by no means the only sins in the world!

Jesus was no sentimentalist. He had absolutely nothing in common with those who talk about "the beauty of misery" or—still more inanely—"the beauty of sin." Misery and sin had no attraction for him. His duty called him into close contact with both—"it is they that are sick who have need of a physician"—and he dealt gently and patiently with the miserable and the sinful. But his purpose was to make them less miserable and less sinful. The poor woman who anointed him had been a sinner, but when he pronounced her forgiven she had ceased from her grosser sins; she had begun to utilize her possibilities of advance. When Jesus said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk," his own task was completed, and all hindrance due to disease was removed. The man was now free to use his strength once more. If he had been unwilling to exert himself and had preferred to lie inert, his healing would not have been of the least benefit to him.

If we were inclined to speculate further on the

[1] This has been vigorously, if inelegantly, described as the doctrine of "the papahood of God."

parable of the prodigal, we might well ask what happened to him when the first rejoicing was over. He was restored to his father's love, and we may hope that his older brother was reconciled to him as well. But he could never recover his old position; his share of his heritage had been squandered and his father had no more to give him.[1] No matter how much affection might soften the facts, his new place in the family must have been something like that of a hired servant, after all, and he faced a lifetime of hard work, without much hope of ever reaching large prosperity. Such a condition was unquestionably infinitely better than herding swine and starving, but it was far other than what he might have enjoyed had he not wasted his most precious years.

Of course, in so imagining the prodigal's future, we are going beyond Jesus' purpose in telling the story. We are likewise making a wrong comparison between the father and God, for God's abundance is never exhausted. He is able to give the penitent more than was lost by sin, and experience shows that he often does so give. None the less, our imaginary continuation of the parable contains a very real truth. God's welcome of the penitent makes the beginning of the new life wonderfully easy, but at every point in that new life real exertion and steady effort will be necessary.

When such effort is refused, there is an end of any possibility of "becoming sons of your Father who is in

[1] By Jewish law all the rest of the father's estate must pass to the older brother, whether the father wished it so or not.

heaven." Where there is no desire to imitate God, where there is a continual assent to selfishness, where there is a persistent preference for the worse instead of the better, then a condition exists that of itself destroys the likeness to the Father. For such a condition, as long as it continues, God Himself can do nothing; "forgiveness" of the sins of a man in such a state would be a meaningless phrase. Just as the pharisaic sins are not the only sins in the world, so the pharisaic obstinacy is not the only obstinacy in the world, and Jesus' condemnation of the one form applies to all the others with equal force. His warning must never be forgotten. And to turn back from any settled perversion of the moral instinct to sound relations with God and with intense effort "follow after righteousness" is a difficult thing; any doctrine that teaches the contrary simply raises up lying hopes.

Back of all Jesus' gentleness, back of all the love in God's Fatherhood, lie the demands of the Sermon on the Mount. Not—we may repeat—as inflexible conditions that must be fulfilled inexorably if we are to win salvation; our salvation we owe solely to the Father who receives us. But if God is to receive us, we must at least have our faces turned toward Him. Our progress, slow though it may be, must be in the direction of the ideals that the Sermon sets forth. We shall no doubt have our moments of hesitation, our moments of stumbling, even occasions when we fall. There is, and never can be, any excuse for that final obstacle to progress, despair; we may always con-

fidently trust to God to help us as we try again. But we must try again. The religion Jesus preached is a constant challenge to perpetual endeavor, a never ending call on us to use our strength; to use our strength in imitation of him, because he was strong.

## *Chapter X*

### Strong Son of God

WHAT was it in Jesus that so seized upon his followers that they left all and followed him? How did they come to find in him the master of their souls? What caused their belief in him to grow with such amazing bounds that they ended by putting him in the place of God and giving him the honor due only to divinity?

The answer is beyond dispute. To quote one whose profession of faith does not go the full extent of the creedal confessions: "The immediate effect of the teaching of Jesus was an effect of power, of authority and mastery, the compelling impressiveness of a leader of men. It is the note of strength. His ministry was dynamic, commanding, authoritative. His dominant trait is force. He has the quiet consciousness of mastery, the authority of the leader; for softness and sentimentality, such as characterizes 'the feminine man,' there was no room in his rugged, nomadic, homeless life."

This impression of mastery, we are reminded, confronts us from whatever side we approach the life of Christ. We see it in the ethical aspect of strength and in the intellectual aspect of the same quality of power—"a strength of reasoning, a sagacity of insight,

an alertness of mind, which gave him authority over the mind not less than the will." We are thinking, now, however, in a simpler way of the masterful Christ. We are thinking of his quiet consciousness of power as that of a man who held sway over the souls of others by the force of a strong personality, simple, manly, honest, courageous, true.

Perhaps some of us need an introduction to the real Jesus Christ. For years we have been learning many things of him which are true, indeed, and never to be forgotten, but which make up only one element of his many-sided character. We have been taught of his tenderness, his gentleness, his meekness; we know of his love and his long-suffering; but we need to be introduced to the Christ who was master of men and held all the vital forces of a complete manhood in reserve for any emergency. The thing which first drew men to him was his power, his forcefulness of personality, his commanding strength.

This is a side of the character of Jesus which specially needs reëmphasizing in our day. Youth in revolt will never be won merely by patience, meekness, gentleness. It does appreciate robust and masterful strength, especially if touched with idealism. That sort of leadership may have for it a romantic attraction.

Think, for example, of Calvary as youth would see it. There is the soldier at the foot of the cross who was won to faith as Christ died. He was a centurion of the Roman guard, detailed to oversee the arrangements for the execution—a rough, plain man whose

mind did not turn naturally to spiritual things, who had known little and cared less about the ecclesiastical disputes among the Jews which led to the Good Friday morning trial. There he stood, impatient for the end, ready to go back and make his report when it was all over. He had given little thought to what the whole matter was about, and he looked on, at first, just curiously. But whatever else he did not know, at least he knew a man when he saw one; and when he had seen Christ die, there awoke in this rough man of battle the essence of faith. "Truly," he said, "this was a son of God." [1] Christianity is concentrated for a moment on these two men—Christ on the cross and the Roman captain looking on—and when the one whose trade had to do with death saw in the dying man, not weakness, but strength, no sign of anything save a power that strangely moved and stirred him, Christ won.

One may look into the mind of the penitent thief and see his response to the same compelling power. He was, possibly, a young man who had become a member of one of the insurrectionist or robber bands that infested the country near Jerusalem. As a youth, he had been captivated by the bold spirit of the leader of such a band; eventually he had joined his company —perhaps out of pure love of adventure, perhaps out of boyish worship of its daring leader, perhaps because his imagination had been fired by some tale of a social wrong that had made his hero an outcast. Now he

[1] *A* son of God; not *the* Son of God—which a Roman soldier could not have said. Luke gives the saying as interpreted, "a righteous man"—a godlike person.

had come to the end of his mistaken career, and he was dying on the cross. Next him hung this fellow prisoner. He knew something of Christ's claims and had heard of his career. He watched the prisoner; and as he watched, slowly he came to see that all his old hero worship had been misplaced. Here was a hero who could inspire his moral respect: courageous, but large-hearted as well as brave; magnanimous, and always bearing himself in a big way. Christ excited in him a love and loyalty that sprang from a sense of his greatness of heart and splendid manliness. Then the thief saw something more, the power that shone through the Lord's weakness, and in a flash recognized his royalty and passed on to quick faith. "Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom."

Jesus Christ was so great in every moment of his life that it is no wonder men gave him ready allegiance. His words were always with power. His life was like his words; his death, like his life.

There are many today who need to be shown Christ in just that way. There was nothing weak or unmanly about him, and there is nothing small or narrow about his religion. He is, indeed, all that we have been taught to picture him in his meekness and lowliness. He was the Lamb of God, who patiently suffered for the sins of men. He was as tender and compassionate as the gentlest woman. No one who has visited a hospital ward will wish to forget that the care shown there is the fruit of Christian love and a reflection of the mind of the compassionate Christ. Yes, Jesus is

all that we have been told in his tender pity. He stretched out his hand and touched the leper, who had not felt the warmth and pressure of a human hand since his loathsome disease came upon him. He went about through the Galilean countryside, by his gracious influence softening men's ills, healing their sicknesses, soothing and comforting their distress. We think of him—and rightly—as the Good Shepherd, carrying the lambs in his bosom.

Yes, all of that he was—and we must never forget it. But he had also the strength of the strongest manhood. He was gentle—yes; but the strong man can always be a gentle man. He was meek and lowly—yes, in disciplined and trustful dependence on his Father. He was no mere quiet visionary, no sadly contemplative saint. He was, as Tennyson says, the "Strong Son of God." He was called the "Master" and men called him such because it was true; he was indeed master of their souls.

The strength of the best manhood is not mere brute force, it is quiet confidence of power. And because Christ was this kind of man, his whole ministry was a ministry of power. That was the reason why men, when they looked up into his face, obeyed. He called them from their homes, their boats, their tax booths, and they gave heed to his call and followed. If women were drawn to him with peculiar loyalty of devotion, it was partly because women as well as men are won by masterful personalities. How marvelously he combined all that is best in woman and all that is best in man! He had patient endurance and he had wonder-

ful forcefulness, the power to suffer and the power to defy. He was the one man who has combined the beauty of womanly tenderness with the strength of sturdiest manhood. In the same hymn in which we sing of him as "Jesus meek and gentle," we call him "Son of God most high."

Take a few instances: He is "led as a lamb to the slaughter," but "he set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem"; a man's man, with a man's fate, and facing it with such resoluteness that as his disciples followed they "were amazed and were afraid." He weeps in love and pity over Jerusalem; but in the temple he is terrible, as with his whip of rushes he drives out those who are defiling its courts with noisy trade. He prays in Gethsemane in an agony of emotion; but when he steps out of the garden, the crowd of soldiers quails before his stern glance. He is all gentleness to the woman who is a sinner; but he stands face to face with the Pharisees and is unsparing in his denunciation—his words bite and burn and they are flung in the very teeth of the men who have power to drive him to death. Little children love to be near him and are unafraid in his presence; but his message to Herod begins, "Go and tell that fox." Even his opponents recognize his fearlessness: "Master, we know that you are true and care for no man: neither do you have regard for the persons of men."

Perhaps the most potent source of the misconception of the nature of Jesus is found in the conventional pictures of him. These represent a man of less than middle stature, with golden-brown hair and beard,

delicate features, and small hands and feet; often the complete and perfect embodiment of everything that is unmanly. The worst examples of this "religious art," unfortunately, are found in the pictures designed for children, thus stamping on the minds of the little ones a perverted idea which will abide with them for life. When such a figure is represented, for example, as driving the traders from the temple, the effect is ludicrous; it is impossible to imagine what the merchants are afraid of. The man who could act in such a way in such a place must have been impressive in appearance and of great physical strength. As a Jew of Palestine, moreover, his hair and beard would have been intensely black. As a professional carpenter, or builder, his hands, while skillful, would have been rough and hard.

If he was that sort of man, then of course he was not demonstrative and gushing—God save us from thinking that mere effusiveness is ever going to attract men to religion—he had dignity as well as strength. Nor, on the other hand, was he narrow and censorious; no true man is. He was not sad and somber, but natural and spontaneous. He was glad and free, an out-of-doors man who loved people, was genial and companionable, unaffected, fond of the society of his day, meeting people of all sorts in the hearty comradeship of common life, likable and lovable, genuine, generous, large-hearted, straightforward, and strong.

We have all of us known men who have an unconfessed but very apparent dislike for religion just be-

cause they cannot admire the kind of goodness they think Christianity asks them to admire. They do not see that Christ, with his eager delight in life, with his frank and alert interest in the common affairs of common people, with his buoyancy of spirit, has shown us that we can be good without ceasing to be natural; especially, that we can be good without being miserable; and above all (though we shall come to that later) that our God is the kind of God who is just like Christ.

The Christian character is two-sided. It has softness and it has strength; self-renunciation and self-expression. It is the two-sided character of the Jesus who was meek and lowly, but was also the "Strong Son of God." Its humility is the humility of him who could bend to the task of a slave and gird himself and wash his disciples' feet, just because he came forth from God and went to God. The Christian character, in its meekness and gentleness, is the upgrowth of moral greatness; its power is the fruit of its peace. It is rooted and grounded in self-sacrificing love.

And yet—because this foundation robs what rises from it of all self-interest and self-seeking—the Christian character that issues out of this self-surrender, if it is to grow to perfection, must be daring and impetuous, vehement and intense.

It is just here that we have failed. We have softened and weakened our Christianity and left out the heroic, instead of trying to disentangle the heroic from all that is brutal and boastful. We have supposed the Christian life to mean patient submission, with pas-

sions subdued and vehemence moderated, instead of learning that vehemence and strength and passion and earnestness must still be there, only liberated and detached from self-assertion and self-seeking. We have forgotten that the spirit of Christ is always a challenge to the heroic. What shames us, what humiliates our Lord, what makes anti-Christian cults grow apace, is that we have allowed our Christianity to become so shrunken and withered, so mean and unheroic, so comfortable and commonplace, so little like the splendid self-sacrifice of our leader. If we are indeed his followers, we must have hearts of tremendous purpose, a very passion for righteousness, an intense and burning zeal, an unflinchingly persistent determination to live true to the highest and best, a willingness to do and to dare, if need be, to suffer and endure and die.

## *Chapter XI*

### The Source of Strength

JESUS derived his strength from his unfaltering trust in the Fatherhood of God. If God is our Father, we also can trust ourselves to His care, without anxiety for the morrow.[1]

For thirty years Jesus, whose life was lived out-of-doors, had been watching nature, marveling at the plan and care he saw behind its course. The birds make no provision for the future, and yet there always are birds. Flowers do no work, but the gorgeous purple and scarlet Palestinian anemones[2] outshine any Oriental potentate in his richest robes. Why then do men destroy their peace of mind and waste their energies in fretting about a future which God will direct when it comes?

[1] Owing to the changes in the meaning of English words in the last three centuries, the King James' Version of the Bible often conveys the wrong sense to modern readers. A most unfortunate instance of this is the familiar rendering, "Take ye no thought for the morrow." To us today this implies a command to disregard the future altogether, but in the year 1611—when the King James' Version was made—the phrase meant "Be not *anxious* for the morrow"; this is the correct translation.

Jesus himself took very careful thought for the morrow, on one occasion even withdrawing from his teaching work lest his plans for some months later might be disturbed. In financial matters, particularly, we read that one of the twelve was regularly appointed the treasurer of the band, and that he carried funds enough to be worth stealing.

[2] "Lilies" hardly gives the sense.

Are there not troubles enough today? Why look for new ones about tomorrow? Can we not trust God?

Not for a moment, however, did Jesus think in terms of a shallow optimism. He did not mean that trust in God will smooth out all life's difficulties, insure abundant food and clothing, do away with sickness, and prolong existence to a serene old age. He knew better. In every village market he saw the birds for whom God cares—dead, stripped of their feathers, hanging pathetically, and to be bought for a trifle. The grass that God clothes in beauty he saw, every summer, brown and withered, gathered into heaps and used for fuel.[1] No, Jesus never interpreted the Father's care as something that must rid this world of suffering. He was far too familiar with suffering as a fact.

How, then, did he reconcile this fact of suffering with his doctrine of a loving Father? Many Jews found an easy explanation in declaring that we suffer because we have sinned. This way out of the difficulty Jesus rejected decisively. An incident related in the Fourth Gospel states Jesus' attitude perfectly. One day, accompanied by his disciples, he saw a man who had been born blind. The disciples, puzzled at the inadequacy of the current teaching, asked him to solve the dilemma. Where was the sin that caused this punishment? Not on the man's own part, for no one can sin before he is born,[2] and surely it would be most unjust to make the poor man bear the penalty of any other person's sins, even his parents'. All such logic

[1] In Palestine firewood is scarce and costly.

[2] The Jews knew nothing of doctrines which teach that suffering is due to sins committed in an earlier existence.

Jesus brushed aside: "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents." Then he gives the true reason, as he had come to see it: "This man was born blind, that the works of God should be manifest in him." God's great plan uses every means, including human pain and pleasure alike, to transcend them all in a higher purpose. Our part is to accept this purpose, whether we understand it or not, and to coöperate with it to the best of our ability; in this way only may we share in it. Pain and discipline have their place in the school of effective living. They can be utilized as stepping-stones to spiritual heights. In this way we learn to trust God. As long as we have work to do for Him—we may firmly believe—so long will God give us all that is needful for that work, just as He gives the birds and the flowers everything necessary for the part they have to play. If means for any task are not forthcoming, we must conclude that the task in question is not one that God wills us to perform.

No one was to hold to such trust more heroically than Jesus himself. He suffered hardship after hardship, disappointment after disappointment. His very call to the Messiahship brought with it hunger, weakness, and temptation. His appeal to God's chosen people met, for the most part, with only a shallow enthusiasm or with obstinate resistance; sympathetic response came seldom and from a small group. He was to see hatred swell until it became murderous, involving his disciples as well as himself. He was driven out of his home, treated as unbalanced by his own family, had no refuge except Jerusalem, where certain

death awaited him. And at the end of it all stood the cross. It was from such a background, not with buoyant thoughtlessness, that he taught the heavenly Father's care for His children.

The Father's care Jesus saw as an unceasing love that may carry men into sorrow, suffering, and death; but such misfortunes, bravely accepted and bravely endured, lead into a life whose fullness is infinite.

How could such faith be kept alive? Only by constant prayer. Jesus prayed, therefore, because prayer is the most real source of strength for human kind. Prayer was the breath of his life. It was the only means by which he could be "in tune with the infinite." He must preserve fellowship with the Father if he would know the Father's will and be strong to do it. All his life long he lived in spiritual communion. We read of occasions when he "spent the whole night in prayer," of others when "he rose a great while before it was day," or "while it was yet dark," to begin the day in converse with the Father. He spent such a night in prayer before he chose the twelve apostles; and again before he asked the momentous question of Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" He prayed in an agony of supplication in the garden of Gethsemane. On the cross he prayed for his executioners. Dying there as a criminal, suffering intense physical pain, deserted by friends and surrounded by taunting enemies, he died in deepest and fullest communion with God, breathing a prayer to the Father of whose love he was always certain and in whose presence he felt safe.

There was very little of petition in the prayers of Christ. He rarely asked anything for himself, though occasionally he did make such requests. His prayers were such as took him into his Father's presence for something more than petition—for worship. "Show thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto thee."

There was very little of self in his prayers. The great prayer which he taught his disciples is all in the plural:

> Father,
> Hallowed be thy name.
> Thy Kingdom come.
>
> Give us day by day our daily bread;
> Forgive us our debts, for we forgive our debtors;
> And lead us not into temptation.[1]

The prayer is made up of two little sections, one devoted to God and one to ourselves. Each section contains three clauses. At the beginning stands Jesus' supreme title for God. The second clause, "Hallowed be thy name," is by all Jewish precedent not a petition but a thanksgiving; we express our gratitude to God for all that he has done for us; we acknowledge that his "Name" [2] is holy. And we pray that God will fulfill his purpose for certain and bring the great consummation in his Kingdom.[3] For ourselves we ask

[1] For this, the simplest form of the prayer, see St. Luke XI: 2-4, in the Revised Version.

[2] To Jews God's "Name" sums up his nature and his being.

[3] Compare the next chapter.

only the simplest of blessings, sufficient food, forgiveness, and deliverance from temptation.

At a very early date—perhaps actually by Jesus himself—the prayer was slightly enlarged by explanatory additions. In Aramaic the opening word was *Abba*, which could mean "Father" or "Our Father" indifferently.[1] "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" makes the meaning of "Thy Kingdom come" somewhat clearer; an earth on which God's will is perfectly done *is* the Kingdom of God. At the end, "Deliver us from the Evil One" expands "Leads us not into temptation"; temptation may perhaps be God's will to strengthen us—even as Jesus was strengthened by enduring temptation—but, if God does will us to be tempted, we pray that we may not fail under the test.

At some very early period in church history it became customary to close the prayer with a typical Jewish thanksgiving: "For thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory, forever and ever." Although this ending was probably not given by Jesus, it is perfectly in accord with the spirit of the whole.

The prayer, Luke tells us, was taught by Jesus on an occasion when they came upon him at his devotions. Seeing him, they realized what prayer could be, and asked him to teach them how to pray. They wanted, too, some form of prayer, as John had given a form to his disciples. The prayer that Jesus gave them must have astonished them by its brevity. It is a model, rather than a formal or set prayer, yet it may

[1] Paul, however, in Roman VIII: 15 prefers the simpler form.

rightly be used as a form, provided the form be filled with the spirit of devotion. The prayer is simple, brief, spiritual, clear in meaning. Above all, there is so little of self in it! It is all in the plural. One cannot use it for oneself alone. Once more: this prayer is spiritual, full of God, the longing for His glory, the coming of His Kingdom, the fulfillment of His purpose; full of the desire to acknowledge His Name as sacred. All of Christ's recorded prayers were of the same spirit.

He prayed, so far as he himself was concerned, for direction, guidance, and strength. The purpose of prayer is not to bend God's will to our own will, but to bring our wills into submission to the divine purpose. In Gethsemane, Christ uttered a prayer which seemed not to have been answered; the answer really came in the gradual disclosure of the Father's will. One sees this as the prayer continues: First: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me"; then, "If this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done"; three times, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Then "there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him." It was prayer which made God's will clear and gave strength to submit to it.

What about prayer for ourselves? We remember our own prayers as children, when we asked God for anything and everything: good weather for a holiday, the gifts we wanted at Christmas, all the simple desires of childish hearts. We had the childlike spirit which

Christ asked of his disciples, because we had not yet grown out of childhood days.

Then one day we waked up—waked to the disappointment of unanswered desire. After that, the blows came thick and fast. In time of danger we prayed, but the danger did not pass; in time of impending sorrow, but death came none the less certainly; in time of mental or spiritual distress, but the heavens were closed and God did not answer. We began to understand that God rules by laws which He cannot or will not break: that there are laws of health, and they work with inevitable regularity; laws of economics, and financial ruin follows their violation; laws of nature, and though slow of operation they are always sure. We gave up. Prayer could not do what we had, in childhood days, believed that it could do.

How, then, can we continue to pray, and what can we make of prayer, if we do continue? The answer is simple for one who believes in Jesus Christ as divine; or, for the matter of that, even for one who thinks of him as the best man that ever lived. Whatever one may believe about him, his conception of God is richer than any other man has ever known. Why not try it out? The Christian believer goes further. He believes that Christ came from the bosom of the Father. He believes that Christ knew. He prays because Christ prayed. It is a right instinct that drives us to God. We take it on the word of Jesus himself, who "taught us to pray."

Our prayers, if we do pray, teach us something. The common conception of prayer is that it is an effort to

bend God's purpose to our wish, and the sadness of the awakening is due to the discovery that the facts do not warrant the assumption. Thinking more of God, we find that He does rule the world by law and that to grant our prayer sometimes would, it is true, be to break a link in the chain of cause and effect and throw the universe into ungoverned disorder.

What then? Does it mean that a great range of petitions has become unlawful? Of course not. As there are laws of nature and laws of health, so there are spiritual laws, and our prayer may set in motion forces that will counterbalance other forces, just as by mechanics we can overcome the law of gravitation. What do we know of the spiritual world? May not God have laid down its laws so that much of His giving shall be dependent upon our asking, exactly as the rich treasures of the earth—the grain in the fields, the fruit on the trees, the wealth of the mines—are all of them ours only when we have done our part to earn them?

Shall we give up prayer in sickness, for example? The laws of psychotherapy are beginning to show us that more things are done by prayer than this world dreams of. Perhaps, after all, our faith has never been very great, and our prayers for a sick friend have been offered with no decided belief of expectation. "All things that you ask, believing," was the way Jesus put it, and we have been praying always with the thought in the background that the prayer could not avail. Of course it may not. In the face of facts —bitter facts of experience for others as well as for

ourselves—we know that there are laws which no prayer will ever overcome. But we pray on, nevertheless, and when the answer does not come, sometimes at least we see more clearly.

One thing we see is that God often answers prayer through human agents and in human work. The skill and understanding of the physician, the new health laws which medical science is constantly discovering, above all, the deeper sympathy with the world's pain and the quickened desire to help which have lightened to such an extent the world's burden—who knows what part prayer has had in all this? The spirit of social service which has brought light into so many dark places and made human life so much less hard to endure—who can say how much prayer had to do with the enlightenment? The new sense of corporate responsibility, with its education toward a better industrial order—has prayer had nothing to do with opening our eyes there? There is indeed an "intercession which is coöperation with God"; and God has been showing us many things of late of which the world has long been ignorant. The growth of the social spirit as a late fruit of Christianity may "make possible the rebirth of a Christian community which can become the strongest force in the world." Prayer pointed out the path of progress.

So we pray because Jesus Christ prayed, and we try to pray as he prayed. In the garden, "the Son of Man feels the hour at hand; shrinks from it, flees from human society—feels the need of it again, and goes back to his disciples. Here is that need of sympathy

which forces us to seek for it among relatives and friends; and here is that recoil which forces us back to our loneliness again. In such an hour they who have before forgotten prayer betake themselves to God, knowing that only with Him can perfect understanding and sympathy be found."

## *Chapter XII*

### The Great Hope

WE HAVE still one more element in Jesus' message to consider. This message was "good news"—a "gospel"—because it taught the Father's readiness to receive all who approached Him as penitent children. If we accept the true ideal of righteousness and realize God's willingness to pardon, we are on the right path. But where does that path lead? Jesus' answer was, "Into the Kingdom of God."

It is important to see precisely what this phrase meant on Jesus' lips.

The term, let us remember, was one in common use. Any Jewish school child would be ready to give the definition. The Kingdom of God is the perfectly righteous state, in which God will rule absolutely and men will worship Him perfectly. With the establishment of the Kingdom human history stops; nothing can follow God's final rule.[1] It was in these terms that John the Baptist had preached, reviving—if any revival was needed—and reinforcing the only fundamental definition the Kingdom ever had. Any teaching, ancient or modern, which does not start from and include this definition is defective. When Jesus, then,

[1] When Jews thought of a temporary earthly blessedness (the "millennium") preceding an ultimate and eternal heavenly state, the real emphasis was laid on the latter.

in using the term "the Kingdom of God," [1] does not modify the conception in clear language, we must understand him in the current sense; all of his hearers would have so understood him. Instances of his use of the phrase strictly according to the current definition are very numerous. One of the clearest is found in what we call the Beatitudes, the second clauses of which are as follows:

> Theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.
> They shall be comforted.
> They shall inherit the Land.[2]
> They shall be filled with righteousness.
> They shall obtain mercy.
> They shall see God.
> They shall be called sons of God.
> Theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

So far as the content of these clauses is concerned, they might have stood in any spiritually minded Jewish apocalypse of the period; every phrase describes a condition that can be fulfilled only after the stress of human life is over. Characteristic of Jesus, however, is the poetic structure of the passage: seven parallel phrases, all expressing the same truth, are arranged to form a climax, and are completed by a repetition of the first line to summarize the whole.

Or, again, in a touching phrase uttered at the Last Supper, we read: "Verily I say unto you, I shall no

[1] "Kingdom of heaven," found only in St. Matthew, is merely another name for precisely the same thing. The Evangelist shared Jewish scruples about avoiding the use of the name "God." Jesus preferred direct language. He was always direct.

[2] *i.e.*, the Promised Land; Palestine spiritually interpreted. From Psalm xxxvii: 11. *Not* "the earth."

more drink of the fruit of the vine, until the day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God." This is so much in the language of the time as actually to seem to us a little materialistic; the Kingdom will be found on earth, and in this Kingdom there will be vines, from whose grapes wine will be made.

It is needless to multiply instances, which occur all through our Gospels, especially in the parables. In the Lord's Prayer the petition, "Thy Kingdom come," could have but one meaning, that of the familiar hymn:

> Thy Kingdom come, O God!
> Thy rule, O Christ, begin!
> Break with thine iron rod
> The tyrannies of sin.

So, in the primary sense of the term, the Kingdom of God, as Jesus taught, does not belong to the history of this world; in this sense it is a special title for the final age to come. It is for this reason that John avoids the term in his Gospel,[1] substituting for it the unambiguous phrase "eternal life."

Consequently—and there is not the slightest excuse for blinking the fact—Jesus' deepest interests were not in this world. Earthly issues, no matter how grave, sink into insignificance in the presence of the issue of infinite importance that confronted men. To secure admission to the Kingdom was the one thing needful. If this could be secured, nothing else mattered; if this should be lost, there could be no possible compensa-

[1] There are only two exceptions, St. John III: 3 and III: 5.

tion in its place. In ordinary systems of ethics we are warned that it is "better" to do good rather than evil; that the good man will, on the whole, find greater happiness in life—or at least greater contentment—than will the evil man. But in Jesus' teaching the issue cannot be measured in comparatives of "better" and "worse," with endless gradations between the two. The issue is clear and sharp. No sacrifice one can make is too great, if entrance to the Kingdom can be won. "Whosoever shall cause one of these little ones to stumble, it were better for him if a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out!"

One thing is needful—to put first things first and place the service of God above every other obligation. This is a constant lesson in the parables, or illustrative stories, which Christ used in his instructions.

One thing is needful; and the rich fool discovered this when he had spent his life in the accumulation of property, and then suddenly learned that he must appear at once to render his account to God.

One thing is needful; and if privileges are not used in God's service they may be taken away even on this earth—so we are taught in the story of the barren fig tree, in the fate of the unprofitable servants.

One thing is needful, faithful service, which receives its blessing even when rendered at the very close of opportunity, as with the laborers in the vineyard; even when offered at last, after much grudging and hot-

headed protest, by one who (like the boy in the parable of the two sons) fights against duty, but finally answers the call of conscience.[1]

Among the worst sins are the sins of indifference. The story of the feast which the invited guests declined to attend [2] plainly declares that. So does the story of the marriage of the king's son, with its added warning that spiritual privileges may not only be neglected, but may be accepted with an irreverent nonchalance quite as offensive.

A Christian ethic cannot be content with the values of the present world. To be sure, it does not for a moment ignore this world. Christianity teaches that God made the heavens, the earth, and all things in them, and pronounced them good. The world is no illusion; it is very real and it offers endless opportunities for the service of God. The earthly well-being of our neighbor may determine our acts at almost every point; Jesus' insistence on this was perpetual. But all this is only the beginning. As a great scholar has put it, a system of Christian ethics is not like a circle, with a single center—be that center in heaven or on earth. It is like an ellipse, and it has two foci, one in heaven and one on earth, and both must be taken into constant consideration. Yet of the two the former is vastly the more important; men must live in constant recognition of their destiny and their accountability to God.

[1] One wonders how many young people today are like this boy, defiant and rebellious, yet sound at heart!

[2] Excusing their neglect as busy business men today excuse their neglect to cultivate the things of the spirit.

So earthly values may often be reversed. The first clauses of the Beatitudes state this with classic brevity. How does Jesus describe the character that he would build up in his followers? The world has its own standards for estimating a man's worth, and its own ideas of happiness and success. The teaching of Jesus cuts squarely across these standards.

Do you wish to enjoy the final happiness—to be blessed? Then, he says, learn that such happiness comes to "the poor in spirit"; [1] to those persons, usually poor in earthly possessions as well, who accept patiently and cheerfully the will of God, and are content with what he gives and uncomplaining about what he withholds.

Real happiness, again, does not come by seeking all possible pleasures and shutting one's eyes to everything unpleasant or troublesome, declining to permit anything to make too large a draft upon one's emotions or sympathy. It comes to "those who mourn"; happy is the man who can enter into the world's sin, and sympathize with its sorrow and suffering, until it hurts.

Once more, "blessed are the gentle." [2] The world regards as happy the man who has won his rights and holds all possible privileges and dignities; Jesus declares that the man who thinks little of his rights, and does not always stand on his dignity, or seek to enforce his claims, will in the end receive the larger heritage.

[1] A very technical Jewish term, practically covering all the qualities summarized in the Beatitudes, just as "the kingdom of heaven" summarizes all the blessings promised.

[2] Not "meek," a meaning which the Greek word probably never had. As always, the virtue commended by Jesus is active, not passive.

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness." There are many desires that most men long to have satisfied; the truly happy man is the one who is eager to enrich his inner life, who is literally hungry and thirsty for goodness, who longs for a goodness he has not yet attained.

Many men think more of justice than of mercy, and are fearful of betrayal into emotional reactions; true happiness comes to the "merciful" man, to the man who lets himself go and is full to overflowing of kindness and forgiveness.

In the religion of respectability there is a perpetual striving to make the best of two worlds at once, to unite successfully the worship of God with that of Mammon; real blessedness is for the "pure in heart," for those prepared to make any sacrifice for God's sake, cost what it may.

The victorious warrior is the hero of popular imagination everywhere, but class hatreds, race hatreds, fierce competition between individuals, break a man's peace of soul. The true hero is the "peacemaker," he who brings races and classes, neighbors and nations, rich and poor, hand-workers and head-workers, into reconciliation and better understanding.

Yet peace must not be purchased at any price; true peace can sometimes be won only by standing manfully against the forces that make for social quiescence. "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake"; such persecution may well bring more of peace than of pain. The happiest man is the man who is so sure of his faith and so passionately devoted to truth,

that "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" and the sting of misunderstanding can no longer disturb his peace of spirit.

The happy man whom Jesus describes is like salt that gives savour, like a light in a dark place. Character is the one thing no one can keep to himself. Goodness is a quality that is always being communicated.

## *Chapter XIII*

### "The Healer"

NOT only was Jesus the Great Teacher; he was the Good Physician. Even those who stumble at other miracles have reached the point of accepting the accounts of his healing mission, however they may explain the facts. Indeed, it could hardly be otherwise, if we are to preserve any living portrait of Christ; for the records of his gracious deeds run so closely through the gospel narrative that they are like threads woven in the cloth which cannot be cut away without destroying the garment.

The picture is clear. Jesus went about the towns and villages and through the countryside of Galilee restoring into harmony with the beautiful world about him the sin-sick souls and disease-laden bodies of those who came to him for help. It was indeed a beautiful land then, though afterward Turkish rule desolated it and its villages became filthy to a degree unimaginable in our Lord's day and under the sanitary regulations of the Mosaic law. To most of those who came to see him, Jesus was first known as "The Healer."

And many came, attracted by his fame. The demands upon his skill spread like wildfire. Everywhere the sick came with their calls upon his sympathy and vitality. His patients were of all classes, all disorders,

all shades of faith, all degrees of gratitude and ingratitude. They crowded upon him till he hardly had time to eat or to sleep.

And what a list we have of his cures! The man in the country of the Gerasenes whose "other self" cried out that his name was "Legion," as if a great regiment of spirits held him in possession; the blind and dumb man, suffering also from epileptic fits; the boy at the foot of the Transfiguration Mount who fell in convulsions, often tumbling into the fire or into the water; others of whom no particulars are given. How characteristic of a scene of today is the story of the man in the synagogue at Nazareth who suddenly cried out: "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us?" Was he perhaps a religious fanatic, or an epileptic, taken to public worship instead of being sent to a state hospital?

In other than mental sicknesses the list is equally impressive. The man with the withered hand; Peter's wife's mother; the woman with the issue of blood; the centurion's servant; the helpless paralytic let down through the roof; the lepers; the blind man (or were there two?) at Jericho; the daughter of the Syro-Phœnician woman on his only recorded trip outside the borders of his own land. In some cases he encouraged their own will power, as when he said to a crippled man, "Stretch out thy hand!" At other times he emphasized the need of faith:[1] "Your faith has saved you, go in peace." Now and then we read of sickness

[1] Indeed, we are even told that at Nazareth he "could do no mighty work there, because of their lack of faith."

that seems to be associated with sin. Is it not so associated today? Why plunge into questions of sex morality to answer? So we have a striking case where the Master first declared, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," before going on to say, "Arise and walk."

No wonder that in Gennesaret they "ran through the whole district, and began to carry about on their pallets all who were sick, when they heard where he was, and wherever he entered into villages, or cities, or in the country, they put down the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might be allowed to touch if it were but the border of his garment." And no wonder, with power like his, and faith like theirs, that "as many as touched him were made whole."

How did Jesus regard these cures? In general he tended to minimize them. Although his pity forbade him to refuse aid to those who crowded about him, he was reluctant to press overmuch his healing powers. Soon after he began his teaching, the inhabitants of Capernaum suddenly discovered his gifts, and instantly he was deluged with applicants. "The whole city was gathered at the door." He labored over the sufferers until darkness drove the importunate crowd home, intending to return the next day. Jesus, however, resolved that there was to be no other such day; he rose before dawn and left the city. His immediate disciples discovered him in a lonely place, sunk in deep prayer,[1] and they tried to bring him back. He refused curtly: "We will go into the other towns that I may

[1] May not we suppose that this prayer was for strength to resist the appeals of the unfortunate ones, that he might have time for the more important work?

*preach;* I left Capernaum because preaching there has become impossible." Afterward it became a common thing for him to warn those whom he healed to say nothing about it—instructions that were too frequently disregarded.

The reason for this course is obvious. Had he allowed himself to become merely a "miracle man," the purpose of his life would have been frustrated; it would have been impossible to keep alive his own contacts with the Father or to deepen the communion with his disciples. It always disappointed him to find that people came to him primarily as a healer. It made him feel how few there were who really cared for the good news he brought or for the Kingdom. So he absolutely refused to perform any work save as he was moved thereto by the spirit of mercy. The Pharisees were always demanding of him "a sign"; even Herod hoped, on one occasion, to see some miracle wrought by him, but that was not the way he desired to win adherence.

None the less, Jesus did not look upon the opportunity for such healings with indifference. He would not work a cure to prove his claims, but the cures, when worked, could at least point the minds of observers in the right direction. On a brief visit to the east side of the Sea of Galilee he relieved a sick man, and on this occasion he did not command silence. The man wished to "follow him," but Jesus pointed him to a more immediate duty: "Go, tell your friends what great things God has done for you." In this region Jesus had no intention of preaching, and so there was

no danger of having his work submerged by requests for cures; on the contrary, knowledge of his power might very well stir up curiosity, and so induce the dwellers in that district to make the journey into Galilee to see and hear him. Again, when John the Baptist sent disciples to ask, "Art thou he that cometh, or should we look for another?" he sent back the message, "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead [1] are raised up." In addressing a man like John, who, great as he was, still adhered to the outlook of the Old Testament, Jesus used arguments that John could best understand. But for the climax he reserved the work that he himself counted most important—"The poor have good tidings preached to them."

We should notice, moreover, that Jesus recognized that others as well as he could effect cures. There were certain "sons" of the Jews who had some success in what the language of the times called "casting out demons," and he even appealed to the experience of these "sons" to support him in an argument. Yet their success and his were not really comparable; his was so overwhelming that it could be only described as being "by the finger of God." So irresistible, in fact, was his triumph, that everyone ought to see that new and strange powers were at work in the world: "The Kingdom of God has come upon you." This is as near as Jesus ever came to treating his cures as "signs."

[1] Possibly some of these terms may be partly figurative, including the "spiritually blind," etc., but the literal sense is present also.

How are *we* to think about these works of healing? In the first place, of course, modern readers are apt to be puzzled by the reference to demons. Here, naturally, our Evangelists [1] are using the terminology of their own day, when the belief was general that mental and even bodily diseases were to be ascribed to malignant spirits. This is in line with God's plan. A medical lecture in the terms of a modern psychopathologist would not have conveyed anything to the minds of the people of that age. The Bible does not teach science, it teaches religion. Mankind never has been relieved of the necessity of investigation and discovery and never will be. We are free spirits seeking for truth; never empty receptacles to be filled automatically.[2]

We may observe, in addition, that even the non-mental diseases are described for us by persons whose terminology was entirely that of the people of Galilee, not that of scientific modern diagnosticians. Consequently, we are not surprised when we hear that some of the patients [3] were "moonstruck," and even when we meet such recognizable terms as "palsy," "dropsy," or even "leprosy" we are not much the wiser as to the exact nature of the ailments. Certainly we are in no

[1] Not including John, who does not mention this class of cures.

[2] At the same time, we may well wonder if some of our modern explanations of mental disease may not sound as crude to the scientist of two thousand years hence as the theory of demons does to the scientists of today. The effect of mind upon matter has always been a mystery. Men talk much about it, but no one understands it, not even men of science. They may tell us about dual personalities and the subliminal self, about various "complexes" and neurasthenic delusions, and yet the mystery remains. The mind itself is a mystery.

[3] St. Matthew IV: 24, compare XVII: 15. The Revised Version translates by "epileptic."

position to divide the diseases into "functional," which could be healed by suggestion, and "organic," which probably could not be reached by this means—although this is something that we do not really know. There is, therefore, no point in undertaking an analysis of the various cures in order to decide how much "natural" or "supernatural" power was needed in each case. As has been said before, even those who stumble at other miracles have reached the point of accepting—at least in general—the accounts of Jesus' healing mission. There are too many parallels from both ancient and modern times, too many cases whose authenticity is impregnable, to prevent acceptance.

What deductions are we to draw from this fact? Certainly that in studying Jesus we are in the presence of a unique and dominating personality, whose success in relieving distress—mental distress, in particular—was extraordinary. His own interpretation of his powers will probably lead us, as it led him, to think of special endowments from God for a new and wholly revolutionary work. But he never treats his cures as ends in themselves; at the utmost they may arouse in us sympathetic curiosity, and so quicken our interest in his teaching.

There is something more important than bodily health—health of spirit—and we do well to remember that Jesus plainly implied this in the economy he exercised in the use of his healing gifts. The purpose of the Christian religion is not to make life easier, but to make men brave to endure. Faith is not given that all pain may be removed and perfect peace secured; its

fruit is the patient bearing of sorrow. Probably the fact of pain—sin, suffering, sorrow—is the outstanding obstacle to faith in a loving God. Jesus gave no easy solution of the problem. But he did show how to face suffering and sorrow. On occasion, also, he lifted the burden for some. His followers must be exercising the same ministry of mercy; but they, too, should remember that there are deeper wants than the need for physical comfort, bodily health, and happiness; and even in helpful service, which is the fruit of Christian love, they should seek to satisfy the real hungers of the human heart.

## *Chapter XIV*

### The Greater Works

WITH the cures we have not exhausted the miraculous stories told in our Gospels. There are others, miracles performed on the inanimate world: walking on the water, stilling a tempest, multiplying food many hundredfold, and so on. And, on the border line between this class of miracles and the cures we have the stories of raising the dead: Jairus' daughter, the widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus. What are we to think of these?

To begin with, it should be said explicitly that not even dogmatic theologians nowadays hold that anyone is bound to accept and defend every story exactly as written. No one can doubt that in the first century there existed a tendency to heighten marvelous elements, nor can anyone doubt that this tendency has affected to some degree even our Gospel accounts. For instance, in telling of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law from a fever, Mark, the earliest witness, relates that Jesus took her by the hand and raised her up. Luke, in telling the same story, however, states that the fever was "great," and that Jesus did not need to touch the woman at all; "he stood over her, and rebuked the fever, and it left her." [1] We must remem-

[1] St. Luke IV: 38-39; compare St. Mark I: 29-31.

ber, moreover, that the same sort of control would not be exercised over the accounts of Jesus' miracles as was extended to his sayings. It was necessary for the first disciples to have a substantially accurate record of what Jesus said, but no one would think that slight exaggerations of the marvels of his works were reprehensible. We must remember, likewise, that even were we assured of the best first-hand testimony, we should still be dealing with men not trained to exact observation in the modern sense, men who might very well omit the precise details really needed for an understanding of what actually took place.

Consequently, no one can deny the possibility, in individual cases, that events told as miracles were not really miracles at all. For instance, one story describes how Peter on a certain occasion had thoughtlessly pledged his Master's word for the payment of the "temple tax," a special assessment levied in the month Adar [1] for the maintenance of the regular worship at Jerusalem.[2] As the story reads, Peter is told to go fishing with a hook and line, to catch the first fish that comes up; "and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a shekel: that take, and give them for me and thee." [3] The Evangelist appears to be relating a miracle; it would seem that Jesus knew that a fish with such a coin in its mouth was swimming in the lake, and by his power had summoned it so that it would be near and ready for Peter to catch; but it does not follow

[1] February-March.

[2] St. Matthew XVII: 24-27.

[3] The tax for each person was a half-shekel.

that such was actually the case. Jesus' words may have been a mere bantering bit of pleasantry. It is not said that Peter actually went fishing to find the coin; only, perhaps, that he was smilingly bidden to do so. Or it may be that Jesus directed Peter to pay the tax by a catch of fish that would provide the necessary money. Or there may be still other explanations.

Each individual story of a miracle constitutes, therefore, a separate problem, whose investigation must be left to professional historians; and even they, time after time, can only conclude with the verdict, "We do not know exactly what happened."

And yet, although we may acknowledge frankly the reasonableness of modern explanations of some of the stories, experts tend more and more to be suspicious of too easy rationalizations of the accounts of Jesus' powers. For one reason—and a very important one—the miracles, almost without exception, are marked with extraordinary restraint. Anyone familiar with the extravagance of the apocryphal gospels or the legends of the saints knows, without argument, that our Gospels breathe an entirely different atmosphere. For example, in the so-called Gospel of Thomas we read:

> "The boy Jesus went through the village, and a child ran and dashed against his shoulder. And Jesus was provoked and said unto him: Thou shalt not finish thy course. And immediately the child fell down and died."

Or, telling of one day when Jesus was at school:

> "The teacher smote Jesus on the head. But Jesus was wroth and cursed him, and on a sudden he fell down and died."

Our Gospels contain nothing like this.[1] The miracles of the Gospels harmonize with the picture in which they have their setting. To use Bishop Headlam's words: "They are restrained; they are beneficent; they are not made the main purpose of the ministry; they take their place as something characteristic but subordinate; they exhibit the same spiritual power as the words and work of Jesus."

But can we believe, in any true sense, that miracles are possible—"miracles" which cannot, by any twist of the imagination, be accounted for as it is possible to explain various miracles of healing. What are we to think of them?

It will help us to answer this question if we first ask, "What is a miracle?" Take this definition from Dr. Headlam: "A miracle means really the supremacy of the spiritual forces of the world to an extraordinarily marked degree over the material." And he adds: "We believe that there is a spiritual nature in man responsive to the Divine Spirit, and that our spiritual nature can influence what we call our material nature. It often does so; in our own experience

[1] The only possible exception is the story of the cursing of the fig tree. This story, however, has obvious symbolic value. The fig tree represents Israel, which brought forth "nothing but leaves." Compare the allied parable in St. Luke XIII: 6-9.

we have probably known cases where its influence has been very great. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to believe that spiritual nature can be so strengthened and inspired by God's Spirit as to make its power more effective."

Unless, then, we have given up belief in a personal God—that is, a God who has within Himself something corresponding to personal power in us—there is no reason for giving up the further belief that there are, behind nature, possibilities of a directive will similar in action to the directive energy within us, though infinitely more powerful and at present acting in mysterious hidden ways and apparently only at supremely critical times. In other words, we may say, with Bishop Gore, that "human personality, which is the highest form of life known to nature, is a better image of God than physical forces or chemical combinations. Call God, if you will, supernatural, but at any rate you must think of Him as not inferior to man. Here, then, we have a conception of God which is in no way antagonistic to the reign of law in nature, but which gives it a new meaning. The very nature of God is law and order. Nothing arbitrary or disconnected in action can be conceived of in connection with Him. But the principle of the order of nature is now seen to be, not blind mechanism, but the perfect reason and the perfectly free will of the supreme Creator."

There is no ground for the assumption that the physical world—the world of constant physical sequence and invariable law—is a self-completed and closed world, which can admit no influence from any

other world. The evidence is against this theory of a self-complete inclosure; it cannot account for the action of human wills; it binds in chains a personal God, making Him less free than His creatures. There are many signs that scientists today are themselves in revolt against such a conception of the world.

We must therefore be willing to approach the accounts of the miracles with minds both open and sympathetic; remembering that, just as the healing miracles are becoming increasingly more credible in the light of modern psychology, so we may rightly look for new knowledge which will increase the credibility of others. Such an attitude is vastly more sane than that of a past generation, which discarded entirely the miraculous element and sought to reconstruct the life of Jesus without it—simply and solely because they declared the events recorded to be impossible.

In any event, believers in Jesus' deity no longer use the miracles in practical argument to convince unbelievers. As a matter of fact, the most orthodox theologians have long contended that Jesus did not rely upon his divine powers during his earthly life; but used human powers such as those with which we are endowed, only in his case fortified in unique degree by divine grace and in no way weakened by sin.[1]

So, if we regard the works of Jesus as evidences of the extraordinary power of an extraordinary person, with extraordinary spiritual gifts and an extraordinary nature, we shall be on the right path toward a fuller

[1] It should be noted that this conclusion was reached by purely theological considerations; it is not a reluctant compromise forced on the theologians by hard historical facts.

understanding of mysteries that have always required faith for their explanation. Faith does not come because of "signs." The Christian faith must be the result of an experience for us such as the apostles had in their life with Christ. We must live close enough to Christ and long enough with him to know him for what he is. Living with him, we find that his earthly life was a supernatural, creative element within the old world of sin and death, and therefore a miraculous intervention upon the natural development of history and life.

# *Chapter XV*

## Action and Reaction

THE first effect of Jesus' appearance was extraordinary. Such crowds followed him that he could no longer enter openly into a city. "There were many coming and going, and he had no leisure so much as to eat." When he was teaching on the shores of the lake, there followed him a multitude "from Galilee and Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea and beyond Jordan, and about Tyre and Sidon; and he spake to his disciples that a little boat should wait on him because of the crowd, lest they should throng him." On one occasion we hear of his teaching from such a boat, and he may have done so often. When he undertook to secure a little rest on the other side of the lake, "the people saw them going, and many knew them, and they ran together from all the cities and outwent them." Such vivid little pictures tell us more than any amount of labored description.

Much of the popular enthusiasm, naturally, was due to other causes than reasoned acceptance, and in too many cases it was the healer and not the teacher who attracted. But the teaching had its effect. "They were filled with amazement at it, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." [1] So when

[1] A scribe, in giving his decision on a point, invariably quoted the opinions of other scribes and then drew his deductions from them.

Jesus asked his disciples what was the popular opinion of him, he was told that men thought he was John the Baptist risen again, or else Elijah, or perhaps one of the great prophets. Such verdicts show that Jesus' fame as a healer by no means wholly obscured his moral appeal.

How deeply this appeal reached, however, is another question. Jesus was cutting across the accepted moral and religious theories of the day. Intelligent acceptance of his doctrine meant a breach with an all-but-universal tradition, with accustomed practices, and often with the accepted social life. So violent a wrench is too much to expect of most men. They may be attracted by a preacher's eloquence, they may feel dimly the strivings of a conscience he has awakened, but they are very slow to disown their past. Many men, too—perhaps the great majority—fail to perceive the implications of much that they admire; they seize on superficial phrases and are satisfied to go no further.

One class of Jesus' hearers, however, saw the implications of his teaching with perfect clarity: the professional theologians called the Scribes.[1] These men had been working for generations on the interpretation of the Law; they had gradually built up a long series of traditional interpretations which to them were infallible; a right interpretation of God's law was itself God's law, and they were sure that their own interpretations were correct. Anyone, therefore, who rebelled against their conclusions they regarded as an enemy of God. Now the interpretation which Jesus taught struck at the very root of the scribal traditions; indeed,

[1] Chiefly the Scribes belonging to the pharisaic party.

Jesus went so far as to denounce these traditions and their defenders explicitly and by name. So to the Scribes Jesus was nothing less than an ally of Satan.

The long history of theology abounds in dreary controversies which the modern man can read only with distaste. Often he cannot for the life of him see what it was all about, or what earthly difference either alternative would make. Jesus' controversies with the Scribes were of a wholly different type. When they attacked him for his indifference to the rigidity of their Sabbath law, more was involved than divergent explanations of obscure language in the Old Testament. This controversy concerned vitally the nature of God: Is God a being who prefers ceremonial respect for the Sabbath to the health of His children? The Scribes did not shrink from answering, "Yes"; Jesus was outraged at such callousness.

It is worth while to run rapidly through the list of the principal controversies, for each of them throws light on Jesus' teaching about the Father. To the scandal of the Scribes, Jesus not only mingled freely with publicans [1] and "sinners," [2] but even shared in their meals. The Scribes held that God had lost all

[1] These publicans, it may be repeated, had—at least in Galilee—nothing to do with Roman service; they were Jews, employed by Jews, to collect Jewish taxes. But all through the ancient world—quite as much in Italy or Greece as in Palestine—no publican was considered honest.

[2] *i.e.*, such Jews as had abandoned any attempt to keep the ritual law. They worked on the Sabbath, made no pretense of paying tithes, and ignored ceremonial purity. Among Jews such an attitude was invariably accompanied by laxity in moral matters as well, but it was not this laxity that classed them as "sinners."

interest in those who had lost all interest in Him; Jesus replied—unanswerably—that it is the sick who need a physician; the greater the human need, the greater God's response.

The Judaism of the Old Testament, despite all its ceremonial restrictions, was never an ascetic religion, and its law required fasting only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. The Scribes, however, had developed the doctrine that fasting is in itself a meritorious act, assisting toward the remission of sin and therefore to be practiced frequently. The more devout fasted every Monday and Thursday, while John the Baptist imposed an even stricter rule on his followers. Jesus, to everyone's amazement, disregarded the custom altogether [1] and taught his disciples to disregard it as well. Confidence in the Father's love and care had made the mournful practice of fasting hopelessly incongruous. Jesus caustically asked the objectors: "Is it sensible to expect a marriage party to fast while the banquet is going on?" Indeed, under such circumstances, fasting would be worse than incongruous; it would be positively hurtful. It would be like patching unshrunken cloth on an old garment; the first rainstorm would work havoc with such a combination.[2] It would be like putting fermenting new wine into old, weak skins; an explosion would be inevitable.

This attitude of Jesus had further important im-

[1] Unquestionably, however, he kept the Day of Atonement fast; the breach of this would have so appalled everyone that we should certainly have been told of it.

[2] The shrinkage of the patch would tear the old cloth to pieces.

plications. Religions may, generally speaking, be divided into two types, the world-affirming and the world-rejecting. The one type regards this world as providing an opportunity for the active service of God, and consequently emphasizes the positive achievement of good. The other type thinks of the earth as "vile," "a desert drear," full of traps and pitfalls for the unwary, and lays its emphasis on the avoidance of evil. This latter type results in the dour harshness that we associate with the word "Puritan"; it fears pleasure, lest pleasure should offer opportunity for sin; it hedges life with meticulous and often artificial prohibitions.[1] To Jesus, on the other hand, this earth was God's creation, and at creation God had pronounced it "good." Whatever harm man's sin has wrought has not abolished this goodness, and the pleasure that comes through using this world without abusing it is a pleasure given by God.

Just as traditional portraits of Jesus have erred in their sentimentality and lack of manliness, so they have erred through a one-sided insistence on Jesus' griefs and sorrows. We rightly find in the Cross the supreme moment of Jesus' life, but the Jesus of the preaching and teaching days was vigorously and cheerfully *alive*. This world is an opportunity for living: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it abundantly."

We may, of course, overstress this truth, and rob religion of wholesome disciplinary power. Most of

[1] Not, of course, implying that this temperament was limited to the Puritans, nor that Puritans were all of them spoil-sports.

us are unable to live always on the plane to which Jesus' presence in his lifetime raised his disciples. When the Gospels assert that these disciples did not fast while Jesus was with them, they are careful to add: "But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day." We need the stimulus that comes from abstinence in some form or other; without it our religion may degenerate into sentimentalism. Yet, when Jesus spoke of those who had left house or brethren or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for his sake, he promised these followers not only eternal life in the world to come; he promised them, "now, in the present age," a hundredfold satisfaction for everything they had surrendered.

To return to the conflicts with the Scribes. Their fear of ritual defilement caused them to require elaborate ceremonial purifications for all sorts of occasions, especially before meals.[1] Jesus treated the whole practice as absurd: "That which enters into a man cannot defile him." Moreover, in its practical effects the practice could become worse than absurd, for when religious energy is absorbed in microscopic detail, grave sins may slip by unnoticed. The Scribes washed their hands with minute precision—and then they ruled that if an angry son should say to his father, "My property

[1] This practice had nothing to do with hygiene. The tradition expressly stated that clean water was not needed to effect ritual purity; the ritual bathing-places among Jews of the lower class are often unhygienic to an incredible degree.

is consecrated[1] against you," such a son must let his father starve rather than break his vow.[2] Such men were truly those who strained out gnats and swallowed camels!

The culmination of the controversies was reached in the Sabbath disputes.[3] Here, above all, the two attitudes were utterly irreconcilable. The Sabbath, probably more than any other one thing, separated the Jews from the Gentiles, and the Scribes had spent untold labor in making the separation continually sharper. The rules, as we read them, are incredible. If a man wished to pass a gift to a beggar through an open window, it was a sin if he put the gift in the beggar's hand, but not if the beggar lifted the gift from the man's hand. Cooked food might be put on a stove heated by straw, but not on a stove heated by poppy seed. A male camel might wear a bridle on the Sabbath, but not a female camel,[4] and so on, until imagination reels—and all supposedly as declaring God's revealed will! Jesus abolished this labyrinth of casuistry with one sentence: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath"; God is no pedantic taskmaster. To Jesus' arguments there was no reply.

To make matters worse, his cures were undeniable and were winning him popular support; he even carried his disdain of the scribal tradition to the point of heal-

[1] "Corban."

[2] About a century later this heartless rule was changed by the Jews.

[3] Four of these disputes are told at length in the first three Gospels and two in St. John.

[4] Some of these rules may be later than Jesus' day, but he knew others quite as futile.

ing on the sacred Sabbath. There was grave danger that he might alienate the people from the Scribes; an unthinkable calamity. The obvious retort was abuse, and abuse was used without restraint. Sometimes it was merely stupid, as abuse often is. The Baptist was austere, and they labeled him "insane." Jesus was not austere, and they labeled him "drunkard and glutton." At such inconsistency Jesus was amused rather than angry; he compared his critics to petulant children, unwilling in their play either to dance as at a marriage or to mourn as at a funeral. This goaded the Scribes to desperation, and they declared roundly that his cures were the work of the devil. When men have reached such a state, argument is useless. Jesus, indeed, pointed out the absurdity of the charge,[1] but he knew his words could have no effect. He warned the Scribes that they had perverted their moral sense; they had lost the power to distinguish between good and evil. To speak of forgiveness for such a sin would be meaningless, for the power to repent had been lost. Such a sin could be forgiven neither here nor hereafter. The Scribes replied with the last refuge of helpless malice by demanding his death.

Their attitude inevitably affected the attitude of the people as a whole, who were bound to be swayed by the opinions of their traditional leaders. Jesus did not, to be sure, lose all his popularity; we hear of many who were enthusiastic for him to the end. But the Scribes were the center of an opposition that increased swiftly and steadily. Jesus warned his dis-

[1] Compare page 99.

ciples that they, too, must expect hatred and slander. Many cities would be closed to them altogether; men would revile them and persecute them and say all manner of evil against them falsely. The only reply the disciples must make was to preach the truth clearly and courageously, regardless of the antagonism that such preaching might arouse. To Jesus peace was the highest ideal, but not a peace won by any compromise with evil; before the final peace could be attained there must be a time of desperate strife and division. Families might and would be rent asunder; usually the younger generation, more receptive of new ideas, against the older, clinging tenaciously to tradition.[1] It might well seem that the great Peacemaker had in reality brought not peace, but a sword.

John Wesley was once visited by a discouraged young clergyman, who sought his advice. Wesley asked, "Has no one been converted by your preaching?" "I am afraid not, sir," was the reply. "Have you brought no one to a conviction of sin?" "Not even that, sir, I am afraid." Wesley was silent for a moment and then inquired, "Have you made no one so angry as to want to break your neck?" The young man answered, indignantly, "Of course not; I have always been tactful." And Wesley said, "Well, then, my poor young brother, I am afraid you had better give up the ministry."

There is no more common blunder than to suppose that all men can be won to better living by peaceful

[1] To a very real extent Jesus was supported by a "youth movement."

discussion, by careful teaching, and by good example. The ablest arguments, the most perfect teaching, and the supreme example the world has ever known were those of Jesus, yet his people as a whole rejected him. That men reject the good only through ignorance is profoundly untrue; it was *because* the Scribes understood Jesus' message that they declared him to be possessed by Satan. Most men profess an admiration for righteousness in the abstract, but righteouness is not an abstraction; it is something which, when applied to the individual lives, makes tremendous demands, and often calls for heroic self-sacrifice. Many, therefore, when confronted with the claims of righteousness in their own case, merely grow angry. Well-being, ease, and comfort make an insidious appeal to men, and anything that threatens to interfere with their enjoyments will be met with an antagonism that uses any means, fair or foul, to silence the unwelcome message. Any Christian life, even the quietest, must have its crusading moments, and Christian leadership is a perpetual crusade. The enemies are not only ignorance and stupidity. The fiercest crusade is that against enlightened selfishness, and this crusade may mean merciless warfare.

## *Chapter XVI*

### The Present Kingdom

LOOK! A sower sowing his seed. See where it falls. Some falls on the trodden path, some on shallow earth which barely covers the rock, some among the thorns and briers along the edge of the field, some in the good soil. Many men have trivial minds, and the word will make no impression on them; some are shallow, with no deep conviction; some are so engrossed with the work and pleasures of life that the better nature is stifled; but there is good ground as well, and when the seed falls on such "soil," it grows up and increases, and brings forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred fold. It is comforting to turn away from the resistance offered by Jesus' enemies, and to look at what he did for those who accepted his message.

There were more of these than we are apt to think. "Over five hundred brethren at once" were witnesses of Jesus' resurrection, and they could have been only a fraction of the whole number of first believers. We are not, to be sure, told much about them. Occasionally we hear a name or so—"Johanna," "Alexander and Rufus"—or we may be given a glimpse of a friendly scene: Mary and Martha, or Nicodemus; but most of the disciples were unnamed men and women, whose

relations with the Master were not sufficiently striking to lead our Evangelists to describe their friendship. One inclusive picture, though, tells the story. "Jesus, looking round on them that sat about him, said, 'Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, he is my brother and my sister and my mother.' "

From these disciples, to be found in every place where he preached, Jesus gradually picked specially receptive souls for the closest personal relationship: "that they might be with him." These men, that they might be worthy of the responsibility to be laid upon them, were subjected to the same unsparing discipline which Jesus imposed upon himself. When he felt that a man was fit to receive the decisive command, "Follow me!" he expected immediate and unquestioning obedience. In one case he went so far as to refuse a follower permission to bury his father; any Jew who touched a dead body was ceremonially unclean for seven days, and Jesus' work brooked no delay.[1]

It must not be supposed that these men were called at once to so serious a work, and that they immediately left their professions and followed. The Gospel stories of their "call" tell us only of the final step. There was a growth in their friendship with Jesus which led to the later choice. At first they were merely friends; next they joined the number of the disciples; then they began to distinguish themselves among this group, and were employed for occasional tasks; we hear of

[1] It is possible, of course, that the man merely asked to delay his answer until after the father's death.

seventy [1] "others" who were sent out on an evangelistic journey. Indeed, it would not have been natural or right for them to leave everything and follow him until they had been so prepared and until he knew their capacity for loyalty and leadership.

The number as finally completed—Luke tells us after a whole night spent by Jesus in prayer—was twelve, and as "the Twelve" they were henceforth known. Later on [2] they came to be called "apostles," [3] a term first used of the somewhat larger group who received the great missionary commission from the risen Jesus; the term was afterwards restricted to the Twelve.

> "The names of the twelve apostles are these: Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew; James the son of Alphæus, and Thaddeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot."

Of the first four the early tradition has much to tell us. In the Fourth Gospel we hear of their first meeting with Jesus. Andrew and (presumably) John, son of Zebedee, were disciples of John the Baptist when they were first attracted by the new Teacher. One day they followed him persistently. When he turned to ask them what they desired they could only stammer an embarrassed request to know where he was sojourning. He invited them to come with him and they

[1] Quite possibly a round number.
[2] Very rarely in St. Mark or St. Matthew.
[3] "Men sent on a mission."

stayed all the rest of the day. Years after they remembered the very hour when they met him. It was ten o'clock in the morning. Andrew brought his brother Simon and introduced him to Jesus, and Simon was greeted with the words: "I know you! you are Simon, the son of Jonas. I know your father; I know your early environment; I know your present feelings; I know your weakness and impulsiveness. But I also know your future possibilities. I mean to call you Peter, the Rock-Man." Probably John brought his brother James. The other Gospels tell us of the final call of these four to the number of the Twelve; they were fishermen, and were engaged in their task when the fateful words, "Follow me," were heard; "and they left all and followed him."

The Fourth Gospel tells us of the first call of Philip, whom Jesus himself "found," and the Nathaniel, whom Philip brought, may very well be the Bartholomew of the list above. Thomas was a plain, common-sense, matter-of-fact man, who found it hard to accept what he could not understand, but had extraordinary loyalty. Matthew was "called" from his business office, where he was collecting the customs. About the other James and Thaddeus traditional accounts vary and we really know next to nothing about them. Simon was a Zealot,[1] a political radical, who had taught uncompromising hatred of Rome; when Jesus accepted him, his zeal was turned into better channels. Last in the list is Judas Iscariot, who be-

[1] In Aramaic "Cananæan," a word that has nothing to do with "Canaanite."

came the betrayer of his Master—called Iscariot, probably, because he was a man of Kerioth.

The traditional pictures represent most of the Twelve as men of mature years, but as a matter of fact all of them were probably younger than Jesus himself. Peter, presumably the eldest, was an active missionary up to the day of his death, which took place about the year 65. He must therefore have been approximately twenty-five years old when he first met Jesus. Next to moral sincerity, the most important quality needed in the Twelve was "teachableness," an intelligent open-mindedness that would permit a readjustment of the whole religious outlook. For this, youth was a practical necessity.

Some of the band, we are told, from the beginning thought of Jesus as the Messiah, although their first conceptions of Messiahship must have been most crude. What the others first thought we do not know; no doubt they held him to be a great prophet. As the period of the public ministry drew to a close, Jesus retired more and more from the crowds that always followed him, took quiet journeys with this small group of friends, trained them with painstaking care, bent all his energies toward making them understand the secret of his life. Many of their ideas about his leadership were to be dispelled before their companionship with him was over; they were to learn that he would not "take his power and reign," that the Messiah was to be a "suffering servant," that the path to

victory ran to Calvary and the cross. It is one of the wonders of their story that, with the exception of Judas the betrayer, they held fast or achieved their faith in him as the Messiah, even though he dispelled almost all their ideas of his purpose and work. Nor was such faith limited to the Twelve. It is to be found in many of the disciples, both men and women, even though they lacked the practical qualifications which would fit them to be chosen as teachers. There were many hundreds who accepted in full Jesus' teaching and endeavored to live it out in their lives. As the existence of this group became unmistakable, a new and triumphant note appeared in the preaching of Jesus.

Herod Antipas had imprisoned John the Baptist, and from his prison John sent two of his own disciples to ask Jesus: "Are you the Coming One? Or must we wait for some one else?" If Jesus was truly the Messiah, John could possess his soul in patience, knowing that his release and his great reward were soon to come. Probably Jesus never had a more difficult question put to him. His admiration for the Baptist was profound, and an answer could not be refused, but he knew John's limitations; he knew that an unqualified "yes" would raise false hopes; so he gave John the only reply possible. He recounted his works of mercy,[1] concluding with the declaration that "the poor have good tidings preached to them" as the most important work of all, and left John to draw his own conclusions, with the warning, "Happy is the man who

[1] Compare page 99.

does not misunderstand!" That John's conclusions would be wholly right, however, Jesus had little expectation, and he was obliged to protect himself against the effect of the Baptist's refusal to believe. So he said to the people: "You all know John. You all know that he is no waverer, now thinking one thing, now another, a reed shaken by every wind. You all know he is no courtier, interested only in the rich and great. You hold John to be a prophet, and you are right. He *is* a prophet, and more than a prophet. No greater man than John has ever lived, and yet"—then came the momentous words—"he who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he." John, despite his moral grandeur, still belonged to the old order, which sought God in the earthquake, fire, and hurricane, and those who had caught a glimpse of Jesus' outlook were on a higher plane than the great prophet. Such disciples, Jesus asserted, were actually *in* the Kingdom of God, so that the Kingdom itself was, in some real sense, already present. Just so, he had declared—perhaps not many days before—"If I by the finger of God cast out demons,[1] then the Kingdom of God has come upon you."

Such an assertion came as a startling novelty in the Judaism of the day, and yet it was perfectly comprehensible; many Jews were longing and praying for the time when such language would be true. The Kingdom, as has been said more than once, is in its full and proper sense the final and unconditional reign of God;

[1] Compare page 117.

but few Jews thought of the coming of the Kingdom as wholly instantaneous. It would send powers before it, which, as they touched the earth, would produce portentous results both for good and for evil. The books that predict the Kingdom [1] luxuriate in descriptions of these phenomena, and exhaust every resource of the imagination in painting them in vivid colors. The evil portents are the most popular, and their catalogue is endless: wars, revolutions, pestilences, famines, earthquakes, demoniac horsemen, stars falling to earth; usually ending in an apocalyptic battle and the Last Judgment. But the portents of good appear also: men, touched by the forces of the Kingdom, who prophesy mightily and do wonderful works. Especially interesting in the present connection is one of the favorite apocalypses,[2] which, as one of the signs of the end, pictures a little group of believers, who alone are faithful to the truth and proclaim it boldly despite all persecution.

So, when Jesus said, "If I by the finger of God cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you," his meaning was unmistakable. The Kingdom was so near that forces from it had already reached this earth; the might displayed in his own acts was not of this world. When he spoke of others being "in" the Kingdom, his words were equally clear: divine power was embracing these disciples and transforming them. The Kingdom was coming, so to speak, like a cone. First its tip touched Jesus. Then, as it pene-

[1] The "Apocalypses." [2] The Book of Enoch, chap. 90.

trated further, others as well were included within its surface. On the human side, Jesus' teaching is accepted as a principle of life, a law of conduct, opening the heart that God may reign there. On the divine side there is an immediate answer from God in a new force working in the world, and this new force comes from nothing less than the heavenly Kingdom of God.

Jesus's most complete teaching about the present Kingdom is found in a passage [1] phrased throughout in the language of the purest first-century Judaism. He had sent out a group of disciples to preach and to heal. They returned, flushed with victory, announcing, "Even the demons are subject to us in thy name." So fired were they by their sense of Jesus' power that, by relying on it, they could even restore to sanity men of unbalanced mind. Jesus' exultant reply is boldly figurative. In popular Jewish belief, Satan dwelt not under the earth, but up at the zenith of the sky. There he reigned over this world, which had come almost wholly under his power; from his seat there he sent down his hosts of demons to plague and destroy mankind.[2] This rule of Satan, Jesus announced, is over: "I followed your success in my spirit; I was watching Satan fall from the sky like lightning." [3] To be sure, little seemed to have happened. A few sick people had

[1] St. Luke x: 17-20.

[2] It was perhaps from this conception that Satan was called "the prince of the powers of the air."

[3] This passage has nothing to do with the "fall of Satan from heaven," as described, for example, in "Paradise Lost."

been cured; a few sinners had been converted—certainly there were no imposing or spectacular events. But to Jesus that moment was the most important in the history of the world. His work would endure. He was no longer alone. Others were sharing in some part of his knowledge and in some part of his power. If he should be taken away, they could carry on his mission. Yet, characteristically, he warns the disciples not to emphasize the cures overmuch: "Rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven"—in the heavenly list of the citizens of God's Kingdom.

What had begun would now go on irresistibly. A tree can grow from a tiny seed. Progress would seem small. The seed grows secretly. But the progress is sure. There was but a little company of the faithful, but it would become a great company. In it men would find strength and rest for their souls. It is like the seed from which rises a great tree, in whose branches the birds have their homes. It is like leaven;[1] a very small piece will produce an effect out of all proportion to its size.

The present Kingdom, then, means corporate righteousness, with a community of the faithful giving it definite and visible form. No Jew of the day could think in any other terms; least of all Jesus, with his intense emphasis on activity and brotherhood. The whole concept of Israel's religion was corporate; a people chosen and guided by God. The whole conception of the Kingdom was equally corporate; Israel,

[1] Fermented dough.

purified and perfected forever, chosen and still guided by God. The conception of the present Kingdom is simply the second corporate conception interpenetrating the earlier thought.

The church [1] idea, then—to use the modern term—is not something which arose out of the accommodation of Christianity to the empire in which the Christian faith spread. It is not found only in the system of Paul, supposed to be the first great churchman. It was an integral part of "the mind of Jesus," and was fundamental in his teaching about the present Kingdom; it was a prime object of his work. Christianity is necessarily a life lived in corporate fellowship.

This fact is one which we need to lay hold upon in these days, when the idea has gone abroad that church membership is a matter of indifference, and church loyalties a matter of choice, and that even if we become "church members" we may make our own choice, as we will; the idea that the church is "a mere amorphous aggregation of individual souls, a society through which a set of views may be promulgated—and a more or less incoherent and unstable set of views at that."

No doubt unworthy men would claim membership in the present Kingdom; even the Twelve included Judas. The present Kingdom, so far as it is visible, is like a field with tares [2] among the wheat. And we cannot separate the tares from the good grain, lest we

[1] "Church," derived from the Greek *Kyriake,* means merely "belonging to the Lord." Jews used the adjective freely to describe Israel.

[2] A weed almost indistinguishable from wheat in its immature stage.

root up the wheat with the weeds. The Kingdom, so far as it is visible, will have bad citizens and good, as a net gathers fish, some good and some of no value. When will disloyalty cease and all men do righteously? Only in the day of consummation of all things, just as the tares are not separated from the wheat until the time of harvest and as the good and bad fish are placed in different heaps when the net is drawn in and the catch counted.

Of course Jesus was all the devoutest imagination can picture him in the simple beauty of his life of service. Of course, he did ask, first of all, for personal love and loyalty. Of course the preaching of the Kingdom begins with the spoken word of God. But it does not end there. Entrance into the Kingdom is not man's act, it is God's response to man's act, and entrance into the Kingdom is entrance into a corporate life. While Jesus made men his followers one by one, he never meant his followers to be left loose and unattached. From the most human standpoint of practical necessity, it was natural that individual fellowship should be kept strong and steady through corporate union. Individual attachment, of course; but, after that, corporate union for its safeguarding; rather, corporate union *because* the band of individual disciples was the nucleus of a heavenly Kingdom beginning to manifest itself in this world.

Modern discipleship is hesitating and uncertain because it lacks this higher conception of the church. We shall always leave the church out of our calculations, if we think of it as the afterthought of men rather

than as the forethought of Christ. The church will never be anything but an idea, impotent and unsaving, unless we are sure that Jesus himself meant to bring to earth the first manifestation of God's Kingdom, where life is to be lived in corporate fellowship.

## *Chapter XVII*

### The Crisis

WE DO not know how long Jesus' work in Galilee lasted, nor does the question matter greatly. What is important is the final issue of his work and teaching. It led to a crisis, with men ranged for and against him; disciples so transformed that they could be said to be "in" the Kingdom; enemies so desperately hostile that they were plotting his destruction.

A peculiarity of Jewish law, however, embarrassed these enemies. In their eyes Jesus was a false prophet, to be denounced, tried, and executed as such, but there was in Galilee no orthodox court that could hear the case. Heretical teaching or false prophecy was an offense that lay within the exclusive jurisdiction of the supreme court in Jerusalem—"the Great Sanhedrin"—but in Galilee Jesus was out of the jurisdiction of this court [1] and there was no extradition law. As long as Jesus remained in Galilee he was legally safe.

The only other possibility was to arouse Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, to take action; he would not be likely to worry about the correct legality of anything he cared to do. But Antipas proved difficult. He was intensely superstitious, and his experience

[1] Compare with Appendix I.

with John the Baptist was one he had no desire to repeat. He realized, nevertheless, that Galilee was becoming inflamed and that the situation was charged with the gravest possibilities. His Roman overlords left him a fairly free hand as long as his country remained quiet, but at the first hint of an insurrection he might be exiled without ceremony. Something had to be done, therefore; not to accommodate the Jews, but to save the situation politically. A man of his type always thinks first of devious measures, so he instructed certain Pharisees to tell Jesus: "Leave the country immediately; Antipas is planning to kill you."

This sudden solicitude of the Pharisees for Jesus' welfare was much too preposterous, and Jesus naturally saw through the trick. His scorn led him to use the only phrase of unmitigated contempt that ever passed his lips, "Go, tell that fox!" As it happened, however, Jesus was actually planning to do the thing that Antipas wished. As soon as he finished the little that still remained to be done in Galilee, he would leave the country—but not out of any fear of Antipas! Jerusalem, which had slain so many of the prophets, must have the grim privilege of martyring him, as well, if it would.[1]

The bitter irony of this saying fitly expresses the conviction that lay behind it: Jesus, with his unvarying sense of reality, recognized that his work could end only in death. Any thought of seeking safety by leaving Palestine—surely an easy matter—was dis-

[1] St. Luke XIII: 31-33.

missed as impossible cowardice. His mission was to Israel, and Israel's leaders must not evade the issue. To go to Jerusalem and face these leaders where they were all-powerful was the only course worthy of Jesus. He had no illusions about the outcome, but his duty was clear. Such a decision had far-reaching implications, and, when combined with a conviction of Messianic calling, it produced an unheard-of complication: The Messiah must die. How did this certainty of impending tragedy affect Jesus' conception of his divinely appointed office?

He spoke very little about himself, but a few sayings are enough to show us that his sense of vocation remained unshaken. His message to the Baptist [1] was discreetly worded and contained nothing that his enemies could lay hold of, but behind it an unambiguous Messianic claim is obvious. Still more important is his triumphant reply to his successful disciples,[2] in whose company he could speak with less reserve. After words of mingled praise and warning to them,[3] Luke tells us that "in the very hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit." An ecstatic joy seized him. He said as he prayed:

> I thank thee, O Father,
> Lord of heaven and earth,
> That thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding,
>
> And didst reveal them unto babes:
> Yea, Father,
> For so it was well-pleasing in thy sight.

[1] Compare page 125.
[2] St. Luke x: 21-22.
[3] Compare page 128.

All things have been delivered unto me by my Father,
And no one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father,
And who the Father is, save the Son,
And he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal it.

Or, to paraphrase:

"I thank thee, O Father, who disposes all things, that the learned have rejected me, and my unlearned disciples have accepted me. I accept it thankfully, Father, since such is Thy will. Now I see God's whole plan! God alone knows what Messiahship truly is, and the Messiah alone knows what God's plan truly is: the Messiah—and the disciples whom he has taught."

From Jesus had suddenly been swept away an intolerable burden. His mission was to Israel, and, therefore, as any human judgment must hold, primarily to Israel's religious leaders, who controlled in the largest measure the beliefs of the people. These leaders were recalcitrant; argument, teaching, pleading were all alike in vain. For a time it may very well have seemed to Jesus that his mission was a failure. And then from the humblest level of the nation came disciples who proved their faith victoriously. No one could have expected this. That the "babes" of Israel could outdo the "wise and prudent" was a wholly new conception. Yet it was a true conception. The facts proved it to be God's will; as God's will it was to be accepted, and for it God was to be rendered thanksgiving.

If only such "babes"—unprejudiced by preconceived ideas—could realize the truth, then there must have been a fatal error in the received teaching about the Messiah. Since the righteousness of the Kingdom was

so different from the righteousness taught by the Scribes and Pharisees, the Messiah, who was to bring a Kingdom based on such righteousness, must also be very different. His way to reign must be the way of his teaching; he, too, must be "poor in spirit," "gentle," "merciful," "pure in heart," "a peacemaker," and, above all, "persecuted for righteousness' sake." There was no other way. Only God the Father had known the full truth; now Jesus saw it also—and his disciples were learning it as well, though seeing the truth but dimly.

These disciples had, in truth, been trained in a hard school. The first flush of their enthusiasm made them think that Jesus would soon take his power and reign. They expected much and they expected it at once. They even divided up the offices of the Kingdom among themselves—and quarreled in the process. Often they must have been puzzled and disappointed. At times the foundations must have seemed to them to be slipping. To continue to find the Messiah in one who had failed to win the nation, who antagonized its leaders, who discouraged national ambitions, turned away from those who asked of him political leadership —this would require trust indeed. For one of the Twelve—Judas—the strain was too great, and out of his disappointment came the beginnings of his downfall. Not so with the others; though they did not understand, they felt they could not have been mistaken. There could be no surer light than what they had had, no higher revelation. So, despite the shocks

of readjustment, they were slowly coming to a new understanding of the path the Messiah must tread.

It was the Twelve who were henceforth to be the center of Jesus' efforts. He closed his work in Galilee and withdrew with them into the country ruled by Herod Philip—"the regions of Cæsarea Philippi"—where, undisturbed, he might train the faithful band with painstaking care. One night he spent in absorbed devotion, and then he asked a momentous question, "Who do you say that I am?" He could have had little doubt of the answer, and yet there must have been a moment of anxious expectancy: was their faith still unclouded? Peter, always impulsive, sometimes foolish, but never anything but loyal in all his weakness, was quick to voice the mind of all the rest—"Thou art Messiah."

This was what Jesus had been waiting for; it made the next step in his teaching possible. First of all, however, he issued a stringent warning against disclosing his Messiahship to others;[1] men would misunderstand, and his enemies would find in their hand a fearful weapon.[2] Then came the new revelation, couched in the form of a prediction: "The Son of Man must suffer many things—but there are some of those who stand here who shall not taste of death until they see the Kingdom of God come with power."

For the first time Jesus used explicitly of himself a

[1] In the past, no doubt, they had talked freely enough, but they had nothing but their own opinion to tell; now that Jesus had formally accepted the title, the situation was very different.

[2] If the Scribes had known certainly that Jesus claimed Messiahship, he would have been arrested the moment he set foot in Judea.

title of the deepest import: "Son of Man." As we have seen,[1] the term when applied to the Messiah had only one meaning: a Heavenly Being, who could come from the supernatural realm, bringing the Kingdom of God. This, the highest conception of Messiahship, was the only one now left open to Jesus. As Messiah, he must carry his work on to completion, for a Messiah who left his task unfinished was no Messiah. Thus far, Jesus had given men his message and had pointed the way to God; an achievement of infinite value, but a prophetic, not a Messianic achievement; to call it "Messianic" is simply to misuse words. He had felt and had seen the first forces of the Kingdom in the world; this was a truly Messianic work, but it was only preliminary. If he was Messiah, it was not enough that his work should go on; *he personally must bring it to consummation.* Since he must die, he could not complete his work in this world; *therefore he must complete it from the world to come.* His approaching death meant to Jesus the means that would raise him from the earthly to the heavenly realm, where, as Messiah, he would be recognized as the celestial Son of Man.

His death would have another result. All that teaching could accomplish by itself, he had accomplished. The results were real and weighty, yet the great majority of the nation had not accepted his message. The seed would grow, assuredly, the leaven would continue to penetrate, but the effect of the teaching must be hastened by an act. It was common

[1] Compare page 10.

doctrine among the Jews that the undeserved death of any righteous person would avail for the good of the people;[1] how much more then must the death of the Messiah avail! Indeed, in the Old Testament itself, Isaiah had predicted: "He was despised and rejected of men . . . he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . with his stripes we are healed . . . the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."[2] This passage could not fail to be in Jesus' mind, even though he rarely quoted it.[3] His death would be "a ransom for many"; he would give his body for mankind; through his death he would bring to men a reconciliation to God which his life could never accomplish.

In interpreting the closing words of Jesus' prediction, we must remember that the nearness of the end of the world was a fixed belief among the Jews of the period, and the Baptist had made the expectation doubly tense. Jesus never interfered with a belief that did not definitely contradict his own message, and this particular belief he likewise left undisturbed. Moreover, within the next generation he could fore-

[1] For example: In the Maccabean wars a woman and her seven sons were put to death for their refusal to break the Old Testament laws. When the last came to die, he declared: "But I, as my brethren, give up both body and life for the laws of our fathers, calling upon God that he may speedily become gracious to the nation . . . and that in me and my brethren may be stayed the wrath of the Almighty, which hath been justly brought upon our whole race" (2 Maccabees VII: 37-38). The slight crudity of the language does not obscure the general thought.

[2] Isaiah, chapter LIII.

[3] St. Luke XXII: 37 is the only explicit citation, although the language of the prophecy is echoed elsewhere.

see a catastrophe so terrific that only apocalyptic terms could picture it, perhaps even to his own mind. Upon the Jews who so persistently rejected his warnings there would fall a shattering disaster. When told of certain Galileans whom Pilate had cut down as they were carrying their sacrifices into the temple, the impending calamity made such an event seem insignificant: "Do you think that these Galileans were worse than others? Not at all! Unless you mend your ways, violent death will become the order of the day in God's chosen land!" [1] The country would be devastated, Jerusalem laid in ruins, while of the temple not one stone would be left upon another. Then a new [2] spiritual force would sweep into the world—and at its center would be Jesus himself and in his own person.[3]

All this would come to pass within the lifetime of some of his disciples; [4] this much Jesus knew certainly, although the exact day and hour were not revealed

[1] St. Luke XIII: 1-3.

[2] Closely linked, however, with the force already active in the "present Kingdom."

[3] When Jesus' words are explained from a Christian standpoint, all that was involved in the coming destruction of Jerusalem must be borne in mind. This was vastly more than an appalling civil tragedy. The sacrificial worship of the Old Testament was abruptly abolished, never again to be restored. Judaism was thrown completely into the hands of the Pharisees; the vigorous missionary religion of Jesus' day was hardened into a narrow scribism, interested only in itself. Most important of all, Christianity was released from the last Jewish-Christian restraint, and instead of a "Way" within Judaism it became a religion for all mankind.

[4] As a matter of fact, the destruction of Jerusalem occurred in the year 70, about forty years later, when many of the disciples were still alive.

to him.[1] No one but the Father had this knowledge; hence constant watchfulness was imperative. The fact that the Day was approaching was obvious to anyone who could read the spiritual signs of the times; only the spiritually blind could fail to see them. Men who boasted of their ability to predict the weather ought to be able to see where nationalistic selfishness was leading.[2] Such signs were everywhere. But, on the other hand, what the apocalyptists called "signs" —falling stars, miraculous plagues, etc.—were a myth: "The Kingdom's coming cannot be computed; men shall not be able to say, 'Lo, here is a sign,' 'Lo, there is a portent'; the coming will be suddenly in men's midst." [3] Life will go on, more or less as usual, until the cataclysm: "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in that Day! They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the flood came and swept them all away!" [4]

Such was Jesus' prediction, and in every spiritual essential it was more than fulfilled. But, many will ask, can these warnings have any meaning for us if they referred originally to an event now long past? As a matter of fact, indeed, no historical catastrophe ever had—and probably no similar event ever can have —the radical significance of the fall of Jerusalem. Yet every catastrophe in history has had a spiritual significance of its own; the depths into which national

[1] St. Mark XIII: 32. [2] St. Luke XII: 54-56.

[3] St. Luke XVII: 20-21. The passage is difficult, but this seems the most probable translation. In any case the popular rendition, "The Kingdom of God is within your hearts," is impossible.

[4] St. Luke XVII: 27.

pride and selfishness may lead a people are immeasurable, and careless mankind is never secure. "When they say, 'Peace and safety,' then destruction comes suddenly upon them." In our own recent memory, who can doubt that the Great War could have been avoided had nations been willing to take the teachings of Jesus with any seriousness? Social conflicts, economic conflicts, class conflicts, race conflicts—the same is true of them all; men eat and drink, men buy and sell, men plant and build until the flame destroys them.[1]

What is true of nations and groups is equally true of the individual. Any crisis in a life is a judgment on that life, for good or for evil, according to the moral preparation. John expresses a profound truth when he constantly applies apocalyptic language to the spiritual reactions of every-day existence: "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life." [2] "He that believeth not hath been judged already." [3] At the end of every life, finally, comes the irreversible judgment of death. Here all the concepts of apocalyptics are true without qualification, for to the individual it matters not at all whether God's judgment comes to him or he is taken to face God's judgment. And no one at the beginning of any day can ever be certain that he will see its end.

[1] St. Luke XVII: 28-29.
[2] St. John V: 24.
[3] St. John III: 18.

Does any other meaning remain for us in apocalyptic prediction? Can we yet look forward to a final human crisis? Or will this world go on until, as astronomers tell us, the death of the sun, some millions of years in the distant future, will extinguish the last vestige of human life? The Christian thinker can only answer that he does not know. To use Bible passages literally as predictions of what is yet to take place is futile; for over two thousand years, in Judaism and in Christianity, men have constantly tried to prophesy by such means—and have always failed.[1] When the disciples asked the risen Jesus, "Lord, will you at this time restore Israel's kingdom?" they were told: "Times and seasons are God's affair, not yours. Go and preach the Gospel!" [2] No advice could be better. The remote future does not concern us. Our task is to do our present duty, morally prepared to meet each crisis when it comes—and to leave the rest to God.

[1] By the middle of the second Christian century the Jews wearied so of such predictions that they prohibited them. One indignant rabbi went so far as to say, "Whoever writes a book about the world to come, shall have no share therein!"

[2] Acts 1: 6-8.

## *Chapter XVIII*

### Going up to Jerusalem

WHEN the Twelve first heard Jesus' predictions of suffering, all their long preparation was still too slight for so drastic a message. That earthly disaster could overtake Jesus was incredible, almost blasphemous. It was then that Peter presumed to "rebuke" the Master, "That be far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee"—presumption which met with a response so severe as to indicate the sharpness of temptation which the Master felt in its suggestion of possible compromise and escape. But this temptation had been finally and definitely overcome, and Jesus' only present fear was lest it now affect the Twelve. So he warns them: "By avoiding the duty that now lies before us, we may win temporary ease—but at what a cost! The price would be the loss of eternal life; can any gain be worth that? Even in the present order can a man make any adequate exchange for his life? If he should gain the whole world and die at the moment of success, would the world then be worth anything to him? I must go forward to suffering, perhaps even to crucifixion; if any man would be my disciple, let him prove it by showing himself willing to take up his cross and follow me. Whoso-

ever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever is ready to lose his life for my sake shall save it." [1]

A few days later, with Jesus' stinging rebuke still ringing in their ears, Peter, James, and John experienced the mysterious transfiguration on the mountain. The story is told in symbolic language, but its meaning is abundantly clear; it narrates, so to speak, the events of Peter's confession transposed into a higher key. Once again Jesus' Messiahship is declared, now by the great representatives of Law and Prophecy—Moses and Elijah. Once again, Peter attempted to bind heaven's mysteries to earth by an interference which was meant to be kindly: "Fortunately we disciples are here, and we can make little houses where you three may dwell." Once again Peter is rebuked, this time by the overpowering sense of God's presence; and "they were sore afraid." "This is no earthly Messiah. This is my beloved Son; follow him unflinchingly to death, for his destiny is beyond death." And the supernatural radiance on Jesus' face confirms the message.

What did the disciples understand by the term "Son of God"? Probably very little, as yet. It was one of the titles of the Messiah, but it was very ambiguous. It might be applied to any man specially favored. Of Solomon God had said, "He shall be my son, and I will be his father," [2] while on one occasion Jesus is said to have included Peter with himself under the title "sons." [3] Naturally the disciples were uncertain

[1] St. Mark VIII: 34-37.
[2] I Chronicles XXII: 10.
[3] St. Matthew XVII: 26-27.

how to interpret the phrase. But they must have had absorbingly significant ideas about the name, even though (quite naturally) they had not yet tried to formulate these ideas. Was Jesus God's Son in some superhuman sense? Was it possible, as he had spoken of himself, that he claimed to be the divine Son of Man? Did that account for the glory of his face on the Mount of Transfiguration? Put yourself in their place and you would hardly know what you had seen or heard; certainly you would not know what you had thought or ought to think. That was the way Peter felt; he could only stumble through a few affectionate but blundering words about building shrines.

It appears, indeed, that the Twelve were, for the moment, unable to assimilate Jesus' new teaching and warning. The ensuing days were largely made up of misunderstandings and cross-purposes. Peter, James, and John were so bewildered by the transfiguration experience that Jesus' injunction to say nothing about it must have been an immense relief; at any rate this particular command they kept inviolate. As they came down from the hill, Mark tells us, they found the rest of the Twelve in despair, jostled by the crowd and tormented by the Scribes; they had attempted a cure, and their inadequate faith had made them fail. Shortly afterward Jesus detected them again disputing about their respective ranks, and peace had scarcely been restored when James and John came to him—at an almost miraculously inopportune moment—to ask for the two chief places in the Kingdom! It seems well nigh cruel for the Evangelists to record such

actions of the Twelve, who were to give such proofs of heroism; but the Evangelists were warning their readers—and so are warning us—against the same faults.

Jesus' patience in dealing with the Twelve was so great as to show how fully and sympathetically he understood their difficulties. Only once—perhaps involuntarily—does a sharp reproach break forth,[1] and even then a moment later he is self-possessed and gentle once more.[2] Intensely interesting is his treatment of the dispute about rank. It turned on the missionary vocation which was now explained to the Twelve. The most important missionary, they argued, is he who deals with the most important converts. Jesus answered by calling a child. Putting his arms about the little one, he said: "Whoever in my service has the care of one such little child is caring for me; and whoever receives me, receives Him who sent me." [3] In the value of God's children there is no greater or less; the teacher of an infant class or the mother in a home has as sacred a work as that of the greatest dignitary. In dealing with James and John, there is not even a direct rebuke for their rashness. Jesus carries their request back to the eternal principle which lies behind it: greatness can come only through self-sacrifice. "Can you, too, drink of my cup of suffering? Can you, too, pass through the dark waters that will submerge me?" The brave reply, "We can!"

[1] St. Mark IX: 19. [2] St. Mark IX: 28-29.

[3] The moral of this passage—St. Mark IX: 33-37—is often confused with the famous words about "becoming as little children"; the point at issue, however, is quite different.

shows that despite all surface misunderstandings the progress of the disciples in their painful lesson was sincere. So Jesus tells them, very gently, that their request is beyond his power to grant: "To sit on my right hand or on my left is not mine to grant; it is reserved for those who shall prove themselves worthy." Then, turning to the Twelve as a whole, he taught them: "The Gentiles think that the greatest man is he who wields the greatest power. It is not so among you; he who is truly greatest is he who renders the greatest and most unselfish service." [1]

By way of contrast we are told the story of a man who gave up his opportunity at the first signs of difficulty.[2] Young and well-to-do, his life had been estimable, perhaps largely because in his position he had never been exposed to any great temptation. None the less, he was dissatisfied. Hearing of Jesus, with almost boyish impetuosity he ran to him, and kneeling asked, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus, seeing what was wrong, probed his understanding of the word "good": did he really comprehend what infinite vistas of activity that adjective opened up?[3] Then, reciting a list of elementary commandments, he asked the youth if he had kept them. The answer came, modestly, "Master, in all these things I have guarded myself from my youth." Jesus, touched by his tone, "looking upon him loved him," and offered him the greatest privilege any man

[1] St. Mark x: 35-45.
[2] St. Mark x: 17-31.
[3] Compare page 44.

could receive. He was willing to enlarge the number of the Twelve to include the inquirer, to give him the supreme command, "Follow me!" Only, in this case he must be willing to part with his wealth and take his place with the others in a common brotherhood, where the presence of a specially favored member would have destroyed real fellowship. Nothing was said of suffering and death, but even the lesser sacrifice seemed impossible; "he went away sorrowful."

Jesus, turning to his disciples after this "great refusal," sighed and said: "How hard it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom." Indeed, without God's special help, it was wholly impossible. Jesus understood, in other words, that the life of luxury makes for moral softness; it is tremendously difficult for the man who lives at ease to be less than well contented with life as it is. He knew well that with wealth there is likely to come what Robert Louis Stevenson called "fatty degeneration of the moral nature." And if this degeneration does nothing more than turn heroic possibilities into a pleasant amiability, it is deadly degeneration, none the less.

Returning now to the course of Jesus' ministry, shortly after Peter's confession he and his companions started on their way to go up to Jerusalem for the Passover. It was by no means the gay and joyous pilgrimage to which the disciples had looked forward, remembering other years when they had been a part of the happy-hearted crowds who always went singing on their way to the great festival.

It was dawning on the Twelve by this time that there lay before them no easy road to victory. They hardly understood what the full danger was, but they felt enough to dread the journey. They knew that at Jerusalem conservatism reigned. There, they knew, were the religious authorities and all the established order; there were the Roman power and the priestly caste, who, despite the superciliousness of the Jews, somehow seemed always bound strongly together when self-interest drew them.

And Jesus had aroused the antagonism of the religious rulers. It was plain that his reception in Jerusalem would not be friendly. Opposition was well under way and it would probably become harder and more bitter. The Twelve began to see that if Jesus persisted in his purpose to go up for the feast, there was bound to be trouble, conflict, disaster.

Now they were on the way. He had "set his face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem." He knew that the storm was gathering, could hear its mutterings, felt that it was just ready to break; but he went on with determined purpose, not sadly nor despairingly, but sure, steady, strong, expectant, fearless. No wonder we read that "they were amazed and as they followed they were afraid." [1] Yet they did follow, even though again he warned them of the impending issue. Indeed, being Galileans, they even contrived to forget their anxiety and to revive their dreams of earthly glory; witness the request of James and John.

On the way, they passed through Jericho. Here

[1] St. Mark x: 32.

they met Zacchæus, whose penitent friendship the Master gained.[1] Here they saw him restore sight to Bartimæus. The blind man sat by the roadside, begging. One may easily picture the scene. The road was crowded with pilgrims. Some of the "women who followed Jesus from Galilee" were there, and hundreds of others as well—disciples and non-disciples—together with the crowds who had come out from the city. What was the blind man thinking of, as he sat there hearing the crowd go by? How much did he know of the gossip of the road? Assuredly he had heard the people talking about Jesus, and possibly he had heard what some of these friends of his said. If the visit to Zacchæus had occurred the previous evening, he had probably heard the citizens discussing the action of this alleged reformer in going to dine with a rich rogue. He remembered much that he had heard before of the prophet. Some called him only Jesus of Nazareth, and some actually spoke of him also as the Son of David, the Messiah.

Then something happened. The roar of the road struck a different note. There was a blockade of the people about him. He clutched one of the men in the crowd and asked what it was all about. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by," and in a moment he made up his mind. Basing his petition on belief that Jesus had power and authority, he cried out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." They tried to silence him; but he shouted all the louder, "O thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Then

[1] Compare page 28.

Jesus stopped and asked that the man be called. They told him of the summons, and jumping up and throwing off his cloak he stumbled through the mob, helped by his friends, and came to Jesus. "Sir," he said, in answer to the question as to what he desired—"Sir, that I may receive my sight." "Go on your way," the Master replied. "Your faith has made you well again," and at once his sight returned and "he followed Jesus in the way."

The story is retold here, not merely for its vivid account of the healing—it bears about its recitation the marks of honest statement of fact—but chiefly for the reason which led the Evangelists to include it: Jesus, without rebuke, allows himself to be addressed by one outside of the Twelve as "Son of David." He does not, to be sure, explicitly accept the Messianic title,[1] but neither does he reject it. In Galilee anyone who so addressed him would have been sharply charged, "Hold thy peace," but now the end was too near to make silence of further importance.

As they moved toward Jerusalem the Twelve must have been turning over in their minds many things that had happened in the time they had been with their Master, things that the healing of Bartimæus would vividly recall. What did it all mean? They did not know. All that they knew was that they loved him. And now they were afraid—afraid for him as well as for themselves.

The Pharisees hated him because he had broken

[1] He certainly could not accept it in any "Son of David" sense.

their Sabbath rules, had been careless of ceremonials which they considered inspired rites, had denounced them for the cold-heartedness of their religion, a religion that made them careful of tithing, but careless of acts of oppression toward the poor; hated him because many a time he had declared that even the lowest of the people, the scum of society, had better chances of heaven than their own. They hated him for the "woes" he pronounced against them, for the parables he evidently intended should be applied to them, for the attack upon their practices.

Others honestly doubted. They sincerely believed that he was a dangerous radical. Some naturally opposed him as a blasphemer who made himself too like unto God and deserved death for his sin as well as because of his dangerous doctrine.

And the Twelve: They could only go stumbling on, remembering that he had said, "If you are ashamed of me and of my words, then will I also be ashamed of you, when I come again, in the glory of the Father, and with the holy angels." They could only follow, even though they marched to death; because he had said, "If anyone would come after me, let him take up his cross and follow." They never dreamed that they could be anything but faithful to the end. Had he not said, "What profit is it to a man, if he gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul?"

So they went on from Jericho to Jerusalem; and six days before the Passover he rested in Bethany before going into the city with his troubled friends.

## *Chapter XIX*

### The Days of Lost Opportunity

THE restful night in Bethany must have driven away the fears that had haunted the apostles for days. They seem to have awakened to a happy morning; and when their Master announced his preparations for entrance into the city, they set about in bright anticipation of a joyous festival.

It is not easy to determine exactly the meaning of the Palm Sunday entrance. It may be that Jesus wished to throw down the gauntlet to his enemies, to make it impossible for them to ignore him; this would correspond with his action in cleansing the temple on the following day. Or some have supposed that Jesus, this once, in the effort to give the nation one more chance, allowed himself to meet the expectation of the people and to bend to their wishes. If so, he had in mind an ancient writing, which told how the Messiah should come to Israel—a king, riding on a royal beast; but not a warrior king, a man of peace. For this reason, he sent two of his friends into the neighboring village of Bethphage and told them to bring the ass and the colt they would find tethered at the entrance to the village. Warrior kings rode on horses; when kings went on peaceful errands, they went on asses.

All this seems a little stilted, an approach to the dramatic quite unlike Jesus. It is much more probable that he made the preparations for his entrance into Jerusalem in a quiet way, though preferring not to go quite so simply as on his teaching journeys. The crowds that greeted him made the entrance more of a spectacle than was his intention, and afterward his disciples remembered that one of the old prophets had written about the coming of the King in words that were singularly appropriate to the events of this day.

So Jesus and his followers began the journey to Jerusalem. The Twelve forgot their fears in their rejoicing over the welcome he received. Everyone in Jerusalem had seen or had heard of Jesus, and all wondered if the great teacher and miracle-worker—to them the more important matter—would come to the feast. The religious leaders also wondered, but for a very different reason. They had come to the conclusion that here was a dangerous man. To all their other reasons for hating him, there was added now the fear that if he rode long on this wave of popularity the people would sweep him into rebellion against Rome and to an assertion of national independence. That, of course, could end only in failure, and then they would lose their place and nation. Very subtly the High Priest, who had reasons of his own for hating Jesus, argued that it was best that one man should die for the people and not that the whole nation perish—unconscious, of course, of the meaning later to be placed on his words. "Indeed, yes," said one of the apostles afterward; "not for this nation only,

but to gather together into one all God's dispersed children." Caiaphas spoke better than he knew when he said that Jesus should die for the people; his official position as High Priest gave his words prophetic meaning.

So the priests plotted, while the people rejoiced. On Jesus moved toward Jerusalem, up the road, around the brow of the hill. Other pilgrims joined the company. Still others, anxious to see the Galilean prophet, came out from Jerusalem to meet the party, as, indeed, they often met other companies coming up from various parts of the country. Meeting him, they waved palm branches.[1] Soon some enthusiasts began to throw down these branches to make a carpet on which the prophet might ride; others tore off branches from the trees and cast them before him; this soon became general, after the custom of those who would welcome a king. Then some took off their cloaks and spread them in the road. Meanwhile, unconscious of its deeper significance, they sang their psalm, "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" [2]

[1] John, the only Evangelist to tell us of these palm branches, explains that they were brought out from Jerusalem (St. John XII: 13.) He calls them "*the* branches of *the* palm trees"; probably we are to understand palm branches used at the Feast of Tabernacles in September, which Jews kept in their houses for the ensuing year. Jerusalem is so high above sea level (just about 2,600 feet) that the palm does not grow anywhere in its neighborhood.

[2] St. Mark XI: 9-10. It should be observed that in St. Mark—the oldest account—the crowds do not hail Jesus actually as the Messiah, but rather as a prophet who has predicted the near coming of the Kingdom. This would, in fact, be the attitude of most of the people,

So they moved on. The disciples felt that at last his cause was laying hold on the nation. They forgot their former misgivings. They were sure that great and glorious events would follow this glorious day. They hardly knew what they expected, but at any rate they felt that it would be a mighty triumph for him. After all, his trip into "the enemy's country" was not turning out badly! With happy hearts, they joined the singing crowd. They were full of anticipations of the coming glory.

Then a sudden hush. The gladness went out of their faces, the joy was stilled in their hearts, they looked at one another in amazement: the Master was crying! Evidently he had no illusions; he knew that this wave of excitement would soon pass. They had just turned the brow of the hill and before them lay Jerusalem with its turrets and towers; and he burst into tears at the sight. He saw the city and he saw its future fate; its eager crowd of pilgrims and their real spiritual state. This which was their day of opportunity was passing and its coming had been in vain.

"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come unto thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in

although Messianic acclamations here and there (as in the other Gospels) would have been inevitable.

on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." [1]

How closely these words recall his similar words of tender grief, which show how even in his stern denunciation of the people he was still full of love and longing for them: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

The triumphal entry occurred in the late afternoon, and when Jesus reached the temple it was almost dark. But, says Mark significantly, before he returned to Bethany, "he looked round about on all things." [2] What he saw was far from edifying. When the Old Testament prescribed sacrifices, it laid down strict rules about the condition of the animals that might be brought to the altar, and the rabbis had further elaborated these rules. Since animals fulfilling such conditions were not easy to obtain, the chief priests had undertaken breeding and selling ritually pure beasts and birds. This, in itself, was laudable, but the results were sad. As every sacrifice had to be inspected by the priests before it could be offered, animals not furnished by the chief priests were liable to rejection; so a monopoly was created which enabled

[1] St. Luke xix: 41-44.
[2] St. Mark xi: 11.

the chief priests to charge any price they pleased. Moreover, certain dues could be paid only in a special coinage minted by the same chief priests ("temple currency") and they fixed its rate of exchange to suit themselves. The people naturally hated this state of affairs bitterly, and "den of thieves" was perhaps the lightest epithet applied to the temple market.[1] To Jesus this market was offensive for a further reason as well. Into the great outer court of the temple Gentiles were allowed to enter freely; it was supposed to be a place for their devotions, so that the temple could truly be called "a house of prayer for all peoples." But the chief priests had actually installed the market in this court; in this way they had no rent to pay and their profits were still further increased. That the noise of the animals and the loud bargaining of the merchants made prayer impossible meant nothing to them. Such was the situation—yet nobody saw precisely what could be done about it.

Jesus, however, saw very clearly what could be done. The next morning, armed with a whip and followed by his disciples, he headed a raid that overthrew tables, scattered merchandise, and drove the larger animals in panic out the temple door. The crowd cheered with joy and joined—we may be certain—in the good work. The chief priests were helpless; they knew their unpopularity, and they knew that to use the temple police at such a moment would be suicidal.

[1] Incidentally, as to this the Pharisees sympathized thoroughly with the people; the chief priests and the Pharisees detested each other.

There was nothing to be done but to let Jesus have his way.[1]

On the next day, however, feeling that they must do something, they tried a peculiarly futile move. They sent a formal deputation to ask Jesus: "By what authority do you do these things? Who gave you this authority?" As the official and supreme heads of Israel's religion, they thought they had a right to an answer; perhaps they believed that they could force Jesus to make a public Messianic claim. But he, looking at them in righteous scorn, asked: "By what authority do you question me? You claim to be the chosen interpreters of God's will? Interpret it, then! Tell me, what was John the Baptist's authority?" In confusion they replied that they did not know. This utterly discredited their claims. If, when brought face to face with the searching message of the Baptist, they could not tell whether it was true or not, they proved that their opinions on religion were worthless. Jesus, therefore, curtly refused to talk any further with them.

This was defiance, deliberate and calculated. Jesus had come to Jerusalem to force the issue, and any chance of compromise was now tossed to the winds. If there had ever been any hesitancy among the chief priests about Jesus' faith, the last shred of doubt was now destroyed. All they waited for was an opportu-

[1] Habitually, of course, Jesus condemned the use of force and trusted to the eventual power of God's truth to conquer. But in dealing with such hardened hypocrites as the chief priests, force was the only possible weapon.

nity to seize him, and such an opportunity was bound to come soon.

The other events of the last few days, consequently, merely marked time while the final storm was preparing to break. Jesus went on teaching, more or less as he had always done, though with an added sharpness against the religious leaders, and his encounters with various classes of questioners have no specially crucial significance. In two instances he met opponents whom he had not found in Galilee. In Jerusalem—as was not the case in the north of Palestine—direct tribute to Rome was paid, and certain "Herodians" tried to trap him into pronouncing it unlawful. As these men were the only Jews who defended the Roman rule, they were quite prepared to denounce him to Pilate as a traitor.[1] The Sadducees, aristocrats who rarely left Jerusalem, asked him a frivolous puzzle-question about marriage in the resurrection—and decided then to leave Jesus alone. The only significant occurrence in Jesus' teaching is his question to the Scribes about the nature of the Messiah: how can David's Lord be called David's son? In this question we see the reflection of his faith in his own destiny.

Our First Evangelist, perhaps a little too dramatically, makes Jesus' ministry conclude with a collection of almost every denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees that Jesus ever uttered. Mark and Luke, more appropriately, give as his final public words his praise

[1] Pharisees appear also in the scene, but they would have approved Jesus' answer.

of a poor widow who had cast all her living—two pitiful "mites"—into the temple treasury.

At last the hour arrived when Jesus knew he was leaving the temple and his teaching forever. He had done his best, but he had been unable to prevent the coming catastrophe, so blinded and selfish were men's minds. As he passed out, some of the disciples praised the beautiful building and, sadly, he told them explicitly of what must now inevitably come to pass. Our three "synoptic" Gospels insert at this point appropriate summaries of all his teaching about the future, including what is known as the "little apocalypse," [1] which warns his followers of the conduct to be pursued when the catastrophe is at hand. When they see "the abomination of desolation"—the standards of the Roman armies—approaching, they are to flee without a moment's hesitation. A man standing on the housetop must descend by the outside ladder, a man working in the fields must leave his outer garment lying where he left it; the only safety is in flight. All this actually took place. When the war which led to Jerusalem's destruction broke out, all the Christians abandoned Palestine and fled across Jordan to a city called Pella, where, themselves in safety, they watched from far off the destruction of that Jerusalem which Jesus had called to repentance—and which had refused to listen and had crucified him.

[1] St. Mark XIII: 6-8, 14-20, 24-27.

## *Chapter XX*

### The Final Act of Service

JESUS' challenge to the chief priests was accepted. The end was at hand, and no one could now disguise what that end must be. The Twelve were bewildered by the knowledge, but hoped against hope —all but one: Judas. He, with impatience at the course Jesus was pursuing and determined that he, at least, would face realities, decided to abandon the lost cause, to ingratiate himself with the authorities, and to save what he could out of the wreck. So, at the end, when Jesus withdrew from Jerusalem, Judas sought out the priestly leaders and arranged for his Master's capture.

He was welcomed. At Passover time the pilgrims not only crowded Jerusalem to its utmost capacity, but overflowed into the open fields as well. Tens of thousands encamped around the city, and to find any given individual in such a crush was next to impossible. Moreover, to avoid turmoil, the authorities wished to make the arrest at night, and consequently their best hope was in a traitor. Now a traitor was at their disposal.

Judas is a mystery. Why was he chosen? Was he Christ's one mistake? Or, if it cannot be imagined that he who so clearly read human nature could have

made such a mistake, what was his purpose in choosing Judas? Was it that, near Jesus, he might have every possible chance? And what about the clash of human freedom and divine foreknowledge? It was once a subject which delighted the theological mind. Probably in this day most of us have come to the common-sense conclusion that such questions are among the insoluble mysteries and that we waste precious time in disputes about them.

We cannot solve the mystery of Judas, as it has to do with his original choice; but we can see plainly how his downfall came about. When the tragedy was over, he was seized with remorse and committed suicide. He "went to his own place," and only the Infinite Mind knows whether or not remorse was touched with penitence at the last and whether his "place" was other than the abode to which he has been so readily consigned when his fate has been determined by men who ought to know in their own hearts the power of sin. The tendency in other days was to set Judas by himself as the chief of sinners and to fail to see in him any likeness to oneself. But is he so different from others since? Are there not cool, hard-headed men today just as impatient of idealism as was Judas when he felt that his Master was foolishly persisting in an impossible course?

Jesus was well aware that treachery was at work. He had determined to visit Jerusalem once more for the final Supper, but he took careful precautions. Not even the Twelve were to know the place until the last

moment. Arrangements were made secretly with some trusted Jerusalem disciple, and the two messengers whom Jesus sent for the final preparations awaited him in the city.[1] The room of meeting was possibly in the house of the parents of Mark the Evangelist. We are not sure. The unknown disciple who put at Christ's disposal this room where he might eat the Supper, in quietness and security, did the one thoughtful act which must have been most pleasing to his Master; but, as in the case of the personal history of many another obscure disciple, his name and rank have never been known.

Whether the Supper itself was actually the Jewish Passover Supper proper, or was a preliminary rite, the so-called "Sanctification" [2] of the Passover, held the night before, we shall probably never know. Experts nowadays tend toward the latter view, but there is no unanimity of opinion. At any rate it was held on Thursday night—ever since called "Maundy" Thursday,[3] because it was the occasion of the giving of the "New Commandment."

Elaborate descriptions have been written of the ceremonies of the Supper, but here once more we should rather confess our ignorance. Even if we could determine whether the meal was the Passover or the Consecration, we should still be much in the dark. Our information about Jewish ritual is adequate from the third Christian century onward, but we know very

[1] St. Mark xiv: 12-16.

[2] *Kiddush.*

[3] From the Jewish reckoning it would, however, be called Friday night, for the Jewish day Friday began at sunset of what we call Thursday.

little about the practices in Jesus' day. The outline of the Passover customs at that time is reasonably clear, but details are quite obscure, while the proper procedure at the Consecration was not yet uniform.[1] Moreover, it is hopeless to attempt to fit Jesus' acts precisely into any scheme of traditional Jewish usages; not only did he refuse to be bound by such traditions, but he was deliberately instituting a rite altogether new. So even the few details given in the following account cannot claim more than probable accuracy.

When the "hour was come," Jesus "sat down"—reclined on the low couches—with his disciples; primarily the Twelve, but perhaps not excluding a few others as well. An unnamed disciple[2] "whom Jesus loved" was given the place of honor at Jesus' right hand; this position is technically called "on the host's breast," a phrase devoid of sentimental implications. Then:

"Jesus, knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end." So writes John,[3] at the beginning of a story that tells us the meaning of the final meal with perfect beauty and simplicity.[4] A dispute

[1] One school of rabbis maintained that first bread should be blessed and then wine; another school reversed the order.

[2] Tradition makes him John the Apostle; but we do not, here, go beyond what is actually written.

[3] St. John XIII: 1.

[4] Whether the Evangelist meant his account to be taken as literal history or as a mystical interpretation revealing the deepest sense of the events is, for our purpose, unimportant.

arose among some of the guests as to their relative ranks. Jesus arose, quietly stripped off his upper garments, and tied a towel about his waist, so assuming the costume of a slave. Taking a basin of water, he knelt to wash the feet of the disciples, beginning apparently at Peter.[1] Then from man to man he went kneeling and washing their feet, and then, reclining again at table, taught the lesson of humility of which their dispute over the place of honor clearly showed the need. "I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, coming among you as one who does the work of a slave. I have given you an example of humble service. Be like-minded. Do as I have done."

At the beginning of the meal, Jesus took a cup of wine,[2] recited a thanksgiving,[3] and said: "Take this, and divide it among yourselves." Each guest was provided with a cup of his own, into which he would pour a little wine from the cup Jesus had blessed. Jesus himself declined to drink of the cup, for wine was typical of joy. He continued, "I shall not drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the

[1] The dialogue here between Peter and Jesus is somewhat puzzling to modern readers, especially toward its conclusion, where the disciple impulsively urged, "Not my feet only, then, but my hands and head." The answer that one who had bathed needed not to wash again, except to cleanse his feet, is probably a reference to the temple ritual, according to which the priests bathed before beginning the sacrificial service and then at stated intervals washed their feet of dust before beginning a new part of the ritual. Afterward the words came to symbolize the bath of regeneration in baptism, which is never repeated, though "the dust of sin" must be washed away.

[2] A red, sweet, fermented wine, diluted with from two to four times its bulk of water.

[3] Jewish "benedictions" are invariably thanksgivings; a Jew never says, "Bless this food to our use."

Kingdom of God shall come." [1] The words, based on the old Jewish expectations of a miraculously fertile Palestine under the Kingdom, are Jesus' farewell to his disciples. He must leave them—and yet he looked forward triumphantly to their reunion in the age to come. Earth's greatest tragedy was about to take place. Yet it was vastly more than a mere tragedy, for in Jesus' impending death a new way to God would be opened. So, rising and with the accent of victory in his voice, he took bread,[2] and pronounced the traditional words, still used by every orthodox Jew: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast brought forth bread from the ground." [3] Then, solemnly breaking the loaf, he gave the pieces to his disciples, and said: "Take ye: this is [4] my body." Then, perhaps after an interval, perhaps immediately, he took another cup of wine, and pronounced: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast created the fruit of the vine." He gave it to his disciples, and from this cup "they all drank," not "dividing it" as they had the former cup. Then he said to them: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." [5]

[1] St. Luke XXII: 17-18.

[2] Palestinian loaves are flat and circular, about nine inches in diameter and an inch thick, but the Passover loaves were much thinner. For the latter, wheat, barley, oats, spelt and a local Palestinian grain were all permitted materials.

[3] This benediction was almost certainly in use in Jesus' day and there is no reason to suppose he varied it. It forms the basis of the earliest known Christian liturgy.

[4] In Aramaic "is" is usually omitted, but would of course be understood.

[5] St. Mark XIV: 22-24. Since the words "Do this in memory of me" are not in any of the Gospel accounts—compare the Revised

How did the disciples understand what Jesus did and said? For the moment, of course, deep implications were out of the question. But this much they could not fail to grasp: Jesus' death concluded a new covenant [1] with God, and from his body and blood, which, as the covenant victim, he offered willingly to God, a new power of life was given to them and to all believers. For fifteen hundred years the Passover had been kept by faithful Jews as a memorial of their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. For nineteen hundred years more the new rite has been kept, in sacramental fulfillment of its promise, as a memorial of one who came, according to his own declaration, to deliver mankind from the bondage of sin.

The subsequent events of the Supper and the evening are so well known that it is hardly necessary to enter into details. Jesus warned his disciples that there was actually among themselves a traitor. They were horrified; yet knowing their own weakness, they were all stricken in conscience, and one after another they asked in shuddering whispers, "Master, is it I?" As the unnamed disciple had the place at table next to Jesus, Peter motioned to him that he should ask who it was that could do such a deed. The question was asked, and the reply given quietly, "He to whom I give the sop when I have dipped it"; and then, handing the

Version's note on St. Luke XXII: 19—they were supplied to make explicit what everyone understood to be implicit in Jesus' act. The phrase appears as early as I Corinthians XI: 24-25, but even there it is clearly a part of the older tradition which St. Paul had received.

[1] Contrast Exodus XXIV: 3-8.

sop to Judas, he said, "What you are about to do, do at once." And Judas went out into the night, to seek again the priestly leaders and to plan for his Master's capture.

It is interesting to contrast him with Peter. Just at this break in the feast, the latter had boasted that even though others should find in their Master occasion of stumbling, and so fall, he would never desert him. He was ready to go to prison and death. A few hours later he was sobbing out his heart because he had failed tragically. The warning words of Christ which told how he would make denial three times before the morning's cock-crowing came back to his memory as "the cock crowed the second time."

Before they left the upper room, Jesus took a final precaution. His death was necessary, but the Twelve must not share his fate. The real purpose of his life lay beyond his own days. His task had not been simply to do the little good that could be done in those brief years, in one small corner of the world, but to train a band of men who would understand who and what he was and how his life was to be imparted to others, and would organize a society through which his life would be made known, his death pleaded, and his teaching perpetuated. If the Twelve should die with him, his work would have failed hopelessly. So, by his direction,[1] the disciples borrowed the only

[1] St. Luke xxii: 35-38. But the words of Jesus may have been a tenderly pathetic direction which excused their hasty misunderstanding. There seems to be a gleam of humor, even in this dark hour, in his words, "It is enough," or "The two swords are quite sufficient!"

weapons in the house, two swords; in the darkness these would be enough to delay possible pursuers and to enable the disciples to escape. Escape they must, at any cost.

In years to come, to be sure, the disciples looked back on their desertion with horror; they felt they should have disregarded what they understood to be his command and so go with him to the death. Their sin seemed so awful in retrospect that they painted it in the blackest of colors. Indeed, they knew the fear in their hearts, and perhaps their picture of their own action is not over-morbid. But, if they had not "forsaken him and fled," how would there have ever been any Christian message?[1]

At the close of the Supper, they sang one of the psalms of the evening, and Jesus led the eleven through the street, out the city gate, and across the Kidron, to a garden where he was accustomed to retire for devotion. Here, for a moment, exhausted nature almost gave way under the unspeakable strain[2] beneath which the trusted three, Peter, James, and John, broke down completely. Jesus' last words to them sought to comfort them for their weakness. The temple officials, headed by Judas, came to seize him, and Judas betrayed him with a kiss. Peter, in a moment of ill-advised heroism, went beyond his instructions and attacked Jesus' captors, then cast down his sword and fled in panic. Once more Jesus' manhood flashed out, in power, as he came forth to meet his captors and they

[1] The picture in St. John XVIII: 8 is more objective than that in the other Gospels.

[2] Compare page 82.

quailed before him and stumbled back, falling over one another in confusion.

Before we pass on to the trial and death, it will be well to go back to the Supper; for the new rite which Jesus instituted then has now been the great service of Christian worship for nineteen centuries.

## *Chapter XXI*

### The Great Christian Feast

FOR nineteen centuries Jesus has been remembered in the new feast which he instituted at the Supper that night in the upper room. During all these centuries quiet groups have knelt in silent churches, with bowed heads, offering to him the acceptance and faith which his own generation denied. Let us go back again, then, to the scene of the institution.

Stop a moment and think. Your mother is dying. You sit by her bedside, her hand in yours. She looks up into your face. There are many things you both want to say; but you can neither of you bear them now. At length she does speak, in low, trembling tones, of things which must be said. She tells you what she wants you to do for her in the few days that are left. And then, with a smile that lights up her face, she speaks of some other things she wants done afterward. "You will do it, dear," she asks, "do it for me? And you won't forget me, will you? Do it always, to remember me." What kind of a son would you be if you forgot?

Jesus, who was the world's friend, gathered his followers about him on the night before he died. He was very human. And he had all this human longing not to be forgotten; purged, of course, of all self-seeking

—he would be remembered, not for his sake only, but for ours. He and his friends had met for a solemn and sacred purpose. They had kept together the Supper, a great religious feast of their race. When it was over, he took bread and wine—the bread of the feast and the wine mingled with water. He raised his hands in blessing; he broke the bread and poured out the wine; he told them that his own body would be broken and his blood shed for them. In St. Paul's account of the Supper, which he declares was received from the Twelve and so may be accepted as the earliest tradition, he tells how, as the bread was broken, Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me," and when he gave the cup, "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." All understood that it was the institution of a new memorial feast.

What kind of Christians are we if we forget?

So we think of the Holy Communion first as a devout act of remembrance. If one cannot believe any more than that about it, yet it is possible to come acceptably. But it is more than that. In some way it has always been felt that in this service Jesus touches us, and we receive his very life.

Let us think a moment about ourselves. You cannot see me; I cannot see you. All that you see of me —this hand; this face—is not myself; it is the garment my spirit wears. What you see is only carbon, phosphorus, lime and water and a little sodium chloride mixed. But the real self is not this material body,

it is the living soul which is important. That soul is my real self, though you cannot see it.

The mother's kiss: it is only a little dust of her lips touching the dust of your forehead. Is it? Or is it the fellowship of her spirit with yours in the power of love? The mother's tears: they are only a little water and a pinch of salt. Or are they more?

And Jesus said wonderful things about this sacrament of his life. He said, "This is my body; this is my blood."

It will be objected that he was speaking figuratively. Of course he was. But what do we mean by figurative language, unless it be that our figures of speech are an effort to express a bigger truth than we can put into humdrum prose? The very need of figurative language shows that the idea to which we are trying to give utterance calls for a heavier burden of meaning than ordinary words can bear. To say that words are figurative is not to empty them of meaning. It is to say that the wider conception must be at least as great as the figure itself.

Let us be frank to declare, therefore, that these words of Jesus are figurative. What then? Why, this: that the inner reality which needs such a figure to express it must be great beyond all thought. We are not making the Holy Communion less mysterious, then, if we call the language that describes it figurative language; we have but deepened the mystery.

That is the next thing we feel, then, about the Holy Communion. It is not merely an act of remembrance; it is Jesus' way of giving us his own life. He himself

is present when we do what he commanded. The food we take is not material food only; it is his very life. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?" So Paul puts the question and those who accept Jesus' words on their face value can give but an affirmative answer.

When Jesus said,—implicitly or explicitly—"Do this in remembrance of me," what he chose to be remembered for is significant. He was famous for his teaching, and yet more notable for his wondrous works. Yet he chose neither. He would be remembered in his death. That was because his death was no ordinary martyrdom. He gave his life "a ransom for many." His death was in some way a sacrifice for the sin of the world. Into the world of sin, divine forgiveness came freely; but it came by divine love itself, bearing, before our eyes, our sins or their results. In the death of Jesus, as in nothing else, we see the awfulness of sin, and are brought to acknowledge the penalty that is its due. There, as nowhere else, the pain and the shame of sin are awakened. In the supreme moment of forgiveness we find that forgiveness is made possible because at last we have seen sin with the eyes of God.

It was this that Jesus would bring constantly to our remembrance. The Holy Communion is not simply an act of remembrance, nor is it only the means of

approach to the divine presence; it is a sacrificial service.

Not until men have grown into fuller appreciation of "the Lord's own service" shall we ever know what public worship is, and so it has not seemed out of place to dwell at length on the original institution. Those who wrote the Gospels linger lovingly over the details. The story of the last night occupies much of their space, because it held so large a place in their hearts.

## *Chapter XXII*

### Before the Grand Jury

THE tragedy was now hastening to its end. The panic-stricken disciples had fled. Jesus was under arrest, and before another day began he would be dead —and, the leaders felt sure, forgotten—"dead and done for."

In order to make clear what happened on the first Good Friday it will be necessary to explain something of the law in force at Jerusalem. Southwestern Palestine—Judea—was a minor Roman "imperial" province, under the governorship of an officer called a procurator, one Pontius Pilatus. All criminal charges which might involve the death penalty were tried by him and by him alone. The Romans, however, utilized existing provincial institutions as far as possible, allowing considerable powers to native judicial bodies, both in civil and in minor criminal affairs. Even in capital cases local courts were permitted to conduct preliminary investigations, and to appear as prosecutors in trials before the Roman governors; combining in this way (as it were) the functions of modern grand juries and district attorneys.

The Jews had—however unwillingly—acquiesced in this arrangement. The proceedings against Jesus in the Sanhedrin were consequently equivalent to a

modern grand jury investigation, and the vote, "he is worthy of death," corresponded to our modern way of "finding" or "returning" a true bill of indictment. The procedure in finding this bill, however, was quite different from modern practice. Unlike modern grand juries, the Sanhedrin always called the prisoner before it. Then the charge was stated by some member of the body, who acted as prosecutor. Next, witnesses were called to make out a *prima facie* case, and at least two witnesses must agree in testifying to the crime alleged. If such witnesses could not be found, the case was at once dismissed. If the witnesses appeared, the prisoner was then—and not until then—asked to plead. If he pleaded "Not guilty," he immediately presented his defense, calling such witnesses as he could summon. The prosecution followed in rebuttal, and finally—without summing-up speeches, apparently—the vote of the court was taken. If a good majority—a bare majority was insufficient—voted that the death sentence was deserved, a committee was appointed to carry the case before Pilate.[1]

When Jesus was arrested he was brought to the High Priest's house, and messengers were sent out to summon the members of the Sanhedrin. While waiting for them to assemble, Jesus was taken before the

[1] A Jewish document (*Sanhedrin*) written in A.D. 225 is often quoted in illustration of Jesus' trial. Its evidence, however, must be used with great caution. It contemplates an independent Jewish court, bearing the responsibility for inflicting death, and so it provides safeguards that would have been needless in Jesus' day. Moreover, many of its rules are much later than New Testament times and represent rabbinic ideas of what *should* have been the law, not the actual practice of any period.

High Priest's father-in-law, a very old man named Annas. He himself had held the high priesthood many years before, and continued to be actively influential as a "power behind the throne." Four of his sons had occupied the sacred office at various times; this speaks in loud words of the political astuteness of the family, if not of their corrupt connections with the civil power.

Curious to see what this perverse new teacher was like, Annas sent for Jesus. It was here that Peter's denial occurred. The disciples had all fled; but Peter and the unnamed disciple, after a while, plucked up courage to follow the crowd. Because the latter was known in the High Priest's house, the young girl who acted as a servant at the porter's gate allowed both to enter the palace. The denial was as impulsive as were all Peter's acts. "Surely you are one of this man's disciples, are you not?" This innocent question of the girl caught him unawares and he blurted out a denial. Then he ran out into the courtyard and stood by the charcoal fire with the soldiers.

On the other side of the courtyard, Jesus had been brought to face Annas. Questioned as to his teaching, he pointed to the spectators and said, with dignity, "These men know what I have taught; ask them." It was a veiled rebuke, and at once some of the sycophant servants began to beat him and demand, "Is it thus you answer the High Priest?" "If I have spoken ill," he replied, "give testimony; but if I have spoken well, why smite me?" Annas was baffled and annoyed; but he had played his part and had his honors, and so sent the prisoner to Caiaphas, the actual High Priest.

As they stood ready to depart, Peter felt the suspicious eyes of the soldiers on him and began with braggadocio to join in their conversation. His rough burr betrayed him as a Galilean, and they also accused him. The girl at the gate having run in, probably, and mischievously tormented him, her taunts and their questioning plunged him into a second denial. It was then that one of the relatives of Malchus, whom he had attacked in the garden, recognized him, and with his accusation, Peter denied again, this time with an oath. Midnight [1] had come (the first cock-crowing) without Peter's noticing it; now came the "second cock-crowing," and he remembered—remembered, and turned to see Christ's eyes upon him, and, throwing his cloak over his face, rushed out into the street, shaking with sobs of penitence.

The Sanhedrin was now ready, and Jesus was called before this court. The investigation followed the regular course, but none too smoothly for the prosecutors. The charge was that Jesus claimed to be Messiah,[2] but no witness could be found who had heard him make such a claim. Judas alone could have testified to it—perhaps may have revealed it to the authorities—but Judas already had more than enough. He did not testify, and Jewish courts, like our own, could not take hearsay evidence. For a while it appeared that the prosecution would break down without any

[1] The "first cock-crow" means "midnight"; the "second cock-crow" means "3 A.M."

[2] Properly, "had falsely claimed to be Messiah." But to the Sanhedrin the falseness of such a claimant was not worth proving.

opportunity to call for the prisoner's testimony. Finally, however, two men testified to having heard Jesus say something which they interpreted as a claim of power to destroy and rebuild the temple,[1] a miracle that only the Messiah could accomplish. This was judged sufficient evidence to warrant calling on the prisoner to plead. Caiaphas made the formal demand. Jesus, however, refused to discuss his claims before such a court. In Jewish procedure, unlike our own, a refusal to plead was equivalent to a plea of "guilty," [2] and Caiaphas, as in duty bound, asked: "You then confess that you are the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed? I charge you before God to answer truly!" Before such a question, so put, Jesus could no longer remain silent. It was as if he were put on oath in a modern law court. In Aramaic a question has the same form as a direct statement;[3] it was enough to reply, "Thou hast said it." [4] The Sanhedrin had what it wanted. But, before anyone thought of stopping him, Jesus went on to give the Sanhedrin much more than it asked for: "From henceforth—by what you are to do to me—the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of God as this world's Judge."

The court sat aghast. To claim to be the Son of God, the Messiah, was a crime deserving death. But to claim to be the Heavenly Son of Man—so awful a pre-

[1] Perhaps the explanation is to be found in St. John II: 19-21.

[2] More technically, refusal to present a defense was the modern plea *non vult contendere.*

[3] Illustrated by the wording given above to Caiaphas' demand.

[4] The reply does not mean, "You say so, not I."

tension was nothing short of blasphemy.[1] And it was blasphemy committed in the presence of all the dignitaries of Israel; not the confession of a crime, but the crime itself. Caiaphas voiced the feelings of all when he performed an act, as symbolic and as rigidly prescribed as that of an English judge when he assumes the black cap. Taking a knife, he made an incision through his outer garments and solemnly tore them for about four inches, a tear never to be sewn together again: "he rent his robes." No further witnesses were needed; the court by acclamation pronounced Jesus "worthy of death."

A generation ago—not quite so loudly or frequently, perhaps, today—much was made of the difference between the "Gospel of Jesus" (his teaching about God and righteousness) and the "Gospel about Jesus" (the doctrines about his person and work). It was for the "Gospel about Jesus" and not for the "Gospel of Jesus" that Jesus died. He was condemned because he made himself Divine Son.

[1] The intensely curious Jewish usage, by which "Son of Man" is a vastly higher title than "Son of God" is correctly reproduced in Mark's and Matthew's accounts of the trial. The Gentile writer, Luke, however, has reversed the two titles, perhaps because he thought his readers would not otherwise understand them.

## *Chapter XXIII*

### "Suffered under Pontius Pilate"

THE end was not yet, though it came speedily—it hardly seems possible to us that a case of capital punishment could be rushed through in a few hours.

The Sanhedrin found itself face to face with a new difficulty. The "trial" of Jesus was still to be held, and it must be held in a Roman Court. Up to Jesus' final declaration the way had seemed smooth. Any earthly form of Messiahship had political implications, and with political pretenders the Romans made exceedingly short shrift. But Heavenly Messiahship —Son of Man Messiahship—was a different matter, for it had no such implications. It was a purely religious offense, and Roman courts paid no attention to religious crimes. "Injuries to the gods are the affair of the gods," was the Roman legal maxim. To go to Pilate and charge, "This man claims to be the Heavenly Son of Man" would mean only that they would be laughed out of court. It was in grave perplexity that the Sanhedrin "held a council," in order to decide what to do next.

The decision arrived at was to carry out their original plans unaltered. Pilate would not know the difference between the two conceptions of Messiahship. Moreover, if he should prove recalcitrant, it would be

easy to apply pressure. Were he threatened with a riot, he would not spare an insignificant Galilean artisan, utterly without friends and influence. So to Pilate the prosecutors carried Jesus, with an accusation specifying perversion of the nation, interference with tribute, and claiming to be a king, offenses that to a Roman governor would outweigh murder a hundredfold.

Pilate was already at odds with the Jews, unpopular and knowing it, anxious to vent upon them his dislikes, yet of too weak a nature to defy them in the pinch. He listened to the indictment. Then he looked at the prisoner. A more unregal figure he could hardly have imagined, and with amazement he asked, "*Thou* art the king of the Jews?"[1] Jesus, unwilling even to seem to deny his commission, responded as before, "Thou sayest." After that he was silent.[2] The prosecutors amplified their charges, but Pilate was as yet unconvinced: surely the man before him was only some harmless visionary. Finally, catching at the word "Galilean" and remembering Herod's presence in the city, he sent the prisoner to the tetrarch, with a request for information.[3]

Herod merely made sport of the prisoner, disap-

[1] Greek, like Aramaic, has no special sentence form for questions.

[2] The dialogue in St. John between Pilate and Jesus may represent special information not known to the other Evangelists. Or it may be an interpretation in unambiguous language of the deeper points at issue.

[3] This was not an attempt to transfer the cause to Herod; a case begun in a Roman court must be concluded there. Moreover, Herod had no jurisdiction in Jerusalem.

pointed in his hope of seeing a miracle-worker, and vented his displeasure upon him by turning him over to the bodyguard of soldiers, who mockingly arrayed him in royal garments. He then sent him back to Pilate without, so far as we know, contributing anything to the latter's understanding of the trial.

The rest was short business—short but cruel. Pilate tried once more to release the man, but the Jews cried out that if he did so he was likely to get into trouble with the Emperor. Again Pilate offered to chastise him before he was released, but that was not enough. Just then the holiday crowd came rushing in, demanding the release of a prisoner, as was the custom at the festival time, and Pilate, hoping against hope, offered them their choice of Jesus or a political prisoner called Barabbas. Urged on by the priests, they were quick to choose, and Barabbas was released and Jesus was delivered to be crucified.

The sentence was written down and formally read, "Thou shalt go to the cross." The prisoner was then delivered to a centurion—a non-commissioned officer—for execution. The latter's first act would have been to dispatch some of his men to the place of execution, to erect the upright beams of the crosses—three, because two robbers were condemned at the same time. The prisoners were then scourged; in Jesus' case the soldiers, hearing that he had been condemned for claiming Kingship, mocked him and thrust a thorny crown on his head. At last, wearing the crown and

carrying the cross,[1] he moved out on the sorrowful way to Calvary.

There they crucified him, tying his arms to the crossbeam, then binding this into position on the upright, and finally binding the whole body in such a position that the course of the blood would slowly be stopped. As an added torture the hands and feet were nailed.[2] The two thieves were crucified with him, one on each side; with a mocking title, by Pilate's orders, nailed to his cross, "The King of the Jews."

On the way he had some small human comfort.[3] The women of Jerusalem wept in sympathy. Like the women of today, they were accustomed to minister to the suffering; and it was their practice to give soothing drink to those about to be executed. The women, therefore, were the ones, so it seems, who offered him a drugged wine. He declined, telling them to weep, not for him, but for their children. When he fell under the weight of the cross, Simon of Cyrene was impressed by the soldiers and made to give assistance, afterward (so tradition says) becoming a believer.

At nine o'clock he was crucified, praying for his murderers as the spikes were driven into his hands and feet: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." A little later the brigand, who, with the other robber, had been reviling him, turned upon his

[1] The crossbeam only. No one could, unaided, carry an entire cross.

[2] Crucifixion as a punishment was abolished centuries before it was represented in Christian art.

[3] From this point onward it seems best simply to repeat the story as told in the Gospels.

companion, reminding him that they were suffering justly. Then, won by the Saviour's brave endurance as well as touched by his prayer for the executioners, he cried, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Quick as a flash the prayer was answered, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

So they hung for nearly three hours; and it was then that Jesus, seeing a gathering storm and knowing that the increasing agony would be too much for his mother to bear, sent her home with the beloved disciple, his closest friend, who, with some of the women of Galilee, was lingering near the cross. "Woman, behold thy son." "Son, behold thy mother."

It was noon and he had been hanging on the cross three hours, when the sky became overcast—a sirocco from the desert coming up, probably, which presaged the earthquake of which we are told later. For three more hours he hung in the darkness; then the watchers heard a loud cry of agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

A truthful record? Who can deny it? Who can imagine the invention of such a word from such a man? Who can deny the honesty of the loving hearts that recorded it, sharp as might have been their temptation to conceal it and let men forget its possible implications, its seeming show of weakness and loss of faith? The words have always been regarded as proof of Christ's complete entrance into all human experience. They are a revelation of faith, not of despair; for they are quoted from one of the psalms (the Twenty-second) with which he was doubtless comfort-

ing himself during his agony—an agony which suddenly became so sharp that this one verse rose in a loud sharp cry.

The other recorded words came quickly together at the end: "I thirst"—a cry which aroused the pity of the soldiers, who reached up to his lips a sponge soaked in sour wine. Then, in a sharp cry of agony, "It is finished." And then a sentence of peaceful submission: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and he was gone.[1]

Later, the soldiers came to break the legs of the two dying robbers; and finding Jesus already dead, thrust the spear into his side. The disciple who had returned and was standing by, saw the blood and serum gush out; saw and for some reason found faith returning.

[1] The final words remind us again that Jesus was probably comforting his soul by repeating passages out of the sacred writings, as a sufferer today might whisper psalms, familiar hymns, or oft-used devotions. The psalm from which these words are taken is the Thirty-first, long used in the offices of the church at compline, the evening office: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth." In Jesus' day the verse is said to have been used, especially by children, in the evening devotions. Is it not as if Jesus' last words were said as one might now go back to the prayers said years before at a mother's knee, "Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep"?

# *Chapter XXIV*

## Saturday

A SHROUDED figure in a rock-closed tomb. A broken-hearted mother, whom a beloved disciple vainly tried to comfort. The other disciples, dazed and bewildered, longing for the end of the Sabbath that they might escape home to Galilee. The people of Jerusalem confused and puzzled. Pilate—if he thought about the matter at all—congratulating himself on his handling of a most unpleasant situation. The Pharisees, for once admitting that the chief priests were adepts in the art of government. The chief priests rejoicing that the perilous teacher had at last been silenced. The movement he had initiated had caused them the gravest alarm, but with his death the movement would certainly collapse. His power was over.

Over? It was just beginning.

## *Chapter XXV.*

### Victory

"WHEN I first preached to you, among the earliest messages I delivered to you was a formula which was no invention of mine; I in my turn received it from others. It ran thus:

> Christ died . . . and was buried
> And the third day was raised again.
> He appeared to Peter,
> Then to the Twelve,
> Then to above five hundred brethren at once.[1]
> Then to James,
> Then to all the apostles.

Finally he appeared to me also. No matter from whom you first heard the Christian message, everyone preaches the same and everyone believes the same."

So wrote Paul about the year 55,[2] quoting a formula universally used by all Christian teachers. Paul had so taught it to the Corinthians when he first visited the city in the year 50, but the formula was much older; he himself had "received" it when he was instructed in the faith. This carries us back to the time

[1] "Most of them are still alive, although a few have died."

[2] I Corinthians xv: 2-11. This list of appearances was not meant to be exhaustive; it includes only the appearances to prominent Christian believers who could bear first-hand testimony of their own experience.

of his conversion, which could not have been later than the year 35. And that takes us back, practically, to the Resurrection itself, and into the fullest touch with the first eyewitnesses of the event.

How did these earliest Christians understand the Resurrection of Jesus?

The first Good Friday left the disciples utterly crushed with their sorrow. But it was grief and shame, rather than despair. Jesus had warned them that his death was inevitable, and by Maundy Thursday, at least, they began dimly to understand his warning. His solemn farewell had taught them that through death he looked forward to triumph, and that his sacrifice of himself was for their endless benefit. But then the tragedy had come with such appalling swiftness that they were dazed for the time and unable to collect their thoughts. All of this teaching, however, might soon have come back to remembrance. Crushed and broken as the disciples were, some of them would eventually have sought and found something of consolation in his predictions. None of them could have doubted for a moment that Jesus was with God, as were all the saints of Israel. Yet he was not merely with God, like the other saints. If the disciples believed his predictions—as they certainly did—he was in a unique position, sitting on "God's right hand" until the time should come when he would return in glory.

In other words, we can imagine that, even had there been no Easter experience, the more ardent disciples would still have preached Jesus. But they would

have preached in such terms as those just described. *They never preached in such terms.* Every faithful Jew [1] believed that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were living to God. But the disciples believed and preached that Jesus was alive in an entirely different sense—that he was not only alive to God, but alive to the world as well. They believed and preached that Jesus was *risen.*

They declared that they had seen him. Not as a disembodied spirit or ghost; everyone at that day believed in ghosts, but the disciples knew what they had seen was not that. Not as a vision from heaven, as Peter had seen Moses; the Transfiguration vision never led Peter to think of Moses as risen. The revelation of Christ to Paul, indeed, was a heavenly appearance, but the older apostles held consistently that what they had seen and what Paul had seen were different. The disciples declared, moreover, that the risen Jesus had been seen not only by single persons, but by groups of people—by "the Twelve," by "over five hundred brethren," and by "all the apostles."

This last group is especially significant. An "apostle" in the earliest Christian parlance was one who had seen the risen Lord and was commissioned by him to preach. The office, then, was created at the time of the vision and because of the vision; before this appearance there were no "apostles." [2] Consequently, this group—which was of some size, as it included the Twelve—not only maintained they had seen Jesus,

[1] With the exception of the Sadducees.

[2] On the later usage which called the Twelve "apostles" in Jesus' lifetime see page 122.

but maintained likewise that they had heard him speak, that they had received a solemn commission from him. And here the primitive formula quoted by Paul is corroborated by every other tradition of the Resurrection. "That repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name. . . . Ye are witnesses of these things." [1] "Ye shall receive power and ye shall be my witnesses." [2] "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations." [3] "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." [4] "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation." [5]

Finally, the formula reads "died—*was buried*—rose again." What had been buried rose again. *The tomb was empty.*

Going, now, outside of the formula itself, we notice a further fact. All the appearances, both to individuals and to groups, occurred within a very brief space. The tradition, which was naturally interested to make the time as long as possible, gives forty days (a round number) as the utmost limit. Then the appearances ceased, and everyone knew that they would not be repeated. Favored individuals might be vouchsafed a vision of the heavenly Christ,[6] but the Christians as a whole would not see him in any form until the last day: "Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restoration of all things." [7] Consequently, any theory that explains the visions as subjective, as due

[1] St. Luke XXIV: 47-48.
[2] Acts I: 8.
[3] St. Matthew XXVIII: 19.
[4] St. John XX: 21.
[5] St. Mark XVI: 15. This passage is given last because it was not written by the Evangelist, but by a supplementer; compare page 240.
[6] Acts VII: 55; IX: 5; XXII: 18.
[7] Acts III: 21.

to abnormal nervous phenomena, is at once forbidden. Visions due to an abnormal nervous condition have been studied elaborately by psychiatrists, and their laws are well known. Such visions are common enough. Even group visions, while rare, are by no means unknown. The latter are due to an hysteria affecting a number of individuals simultaneously, when their minds are fixed on a common thought. Such group experiences are difficult to start; they commence normally with one or two ecstatic leaders, whose enthusiasm becomes gradually so contagious as to lead to the ecstasy taking hold of all the members of the group. This group is usually a religious sect; the classic example is a second-century perverted type of Christianity known as Montanism. But, if such phenomena are difficult to start, they are utterly impossible to stop. Once the hysteria has seized the group, it goes on for months and years—the Montanistic experiences lasted for more than half a century—and comes to an end only by a process of sheer exhaustion. Such a sect then passes out of existence.[1]

In the first Christian communities there was excitement enough and to spare; prophecies, revelations, speaking with tongues; ecstasy carried to excesses—the fact should be admitted frankly—that were often morbid and harmful. The desire to see the risen

[1] Sometimes, however, group ecstasy is sharply terminated by irrefragable evidence of the falsity of its underlying doctrines. Such was the case with some American millennial sects in the early nineteenth century. They set a day which was to mark the end of the world. As this day approached, group hysteria rose to grotesque dimensions. But when the day passed harmlessly the sect dissolved automatically.

Christ was passionate, and any condemnation of this desire would have seemed blasphemy. *Yet after the first forty days there were no such visions;* and everyone knew that such visions would never again be repeated. Here, then, the explanation of the visions as due to hysteria breaks down hopelessly. The hysteria was present, but the visions were not. When the hysteria increased and its most characteristic symptom —the speaking with tongues—appeared, the visions came to an end. Hysteria and the Christian visions of the Risen Jesus are as far apart as the poles.

The visions themselves are as impregnable a fact as anything in history. Every conceivable explanation, has been tried to explain the reports and every new theory exhaustively argued. To give a list of these explanations here would be wearisome. Some of them are so ingenious that they are far more difficult to accept than the facts they seek to explain. In fact, the only explanation that can be made to conform fully to the evidence is that the experiences were objective.

Apart from all other difficulties, only the reality of the facts can explain the change in the disciples themselves, the work they accomplished, and the church they established. Great institutions are not built out of the fabric of dreams. Men are not changed, as the disciples were changed, by self-deception, enthusiasm, or the hysteria of some friends of an overwrought, high-strung, and intensely emotional nature. Weak men do not defy authority, face death, convert thousands to their beliefs, reverse the entire course of their

lives, and revolutionize the world, unless there is a sufficient cause to account for the fact that out of weakness they have been made strong. The story of Christ's triumph and of their renewal in the power of his resurrection is the only adequate explanation of the work of the apostles and of the spiritual movement which had its impetus from them.

Turning now to the Gospel traditions, we should notice at the outset that it never occurred to any Evangelist that he was marshaling evidence for Jesus' resurrection.[1] The Gospel writers were believers, who knew the evidence, and were writing for believers who likewise knew the evidence. To the Evangelists Christ's resurrection was not a thing to defend, explain, or prove—it was a matter of course, accepted, received everywhere on the experience of witnesses. Nobody dreamed of debate about it. Consequently, in recording the bare facts about Jesus' resurrection the Evangelists felt no more obligation to give all his words and acts after his rising than they felt to tell everything about his earlier life. They wrote, not to prove that Jesus rose from the dead, but to record that, being risen, he uttered sayings or performed acts that the Evangelists—each in his own way—felt were particularly significant. Just as, for the Galilean ministry, the Evangelists omit events, combine incidents, and unite scattered sayings, at will, so for the resurrection period they do precisely the same thing.

[1] The supplementer of St. Mark, writing in the early second century, is a possible exception.

When Mark wrote his Gospel, he did not trouble to include either the Lord's Prayer or the Golden Rule. Why should he? Every Christian knew both! In the same way, in telling the resurrection stories, the Evangelists do not trouble to include even all the events detailed in the primitive formula quoted by Paul. Of the appearance to James we hear not a word. Some experts think that traces of the appearance to the five hundred can be found in the present versions—especially in the mention of a Galilean mountain [1]—but this is, of course, uncertain. The appearance to Peter, basic in the old formula, is alluded to only once and only in passing.[2] The distinction between the appearance "to the Twelve" and that "to all the apostles" has been for Gospel students a matter of close study for many centuries, but to little purpose.

This—to us—unsatisfactory nature of the Gospel evidence was due to no lack of tradition in the Evangelists' day. The tradition was luxuriant; the difficulty was to choose what to use out of such a mass of material. All of the Evangelists, it should be noticed, center on the two essentials, the evidence of the empty tomb and the delivery of the great apostolic commission, connecting these two fundamental events in any way that appealed to them as suitable. Matthew adheres rigidly to this scheme and does not go beyond it. The same is true of the twentieth chapter of St. John, the original ending of the Fourth Gospel. Mark, presumably, planned to limit himself similarly. Luke's basic plan is identical, but he has

[1] St. Matthew xxviii: 16. [2] St. Luke xxiv: 34.

enlarged his resurrection chapter with a tradition outside the plan; the exquisite beauty of the Emmaus story seemed to him too perfect to be lost. The twenty-first chapter of St. John, probably written by a close disciple after the Evangelist's death, likewise used tradition outside the plan, primarily to relieve the distress that arose when the aged Evangelist died.[1] Even within the central plan, the Evangelists pick and choose at will—as can be seen even in the various wordings given to the apostolic commission.

We should observe, further, that St. Matthew and St. John xxi reflect Galilean traditions, while St. Luke, Acts and St. John xx rest on the stories as they were told in Jerusalem. Visions of the risen Jesus were experienced in both northern and southern Palestine, but the Christians in each locality would dwell on the manifestations vouchsafed to their own communities. The Evangelists, past question, were familiar with many local traditions, but none of the writers thought it worth while to make his narrative move back and forth.[2]

[1] Since a tradition was current that Christ's return would occur while John was still alive, his death caused many heartburnings.

[2] The case of St. Mark is peculiar. As the text stands, the verse xvi: 7 points forward to a Galilean tradition like St. Matthew's. But this verse is a citation of xiv: 28, whose correct translation is, "I will *lead* you into Galilee." That is, the older tradition underlying St. Mark told of a Jerusalem appearance to the disciples (not merely to the women), and a triumphal return to Galilee, where Christ was seen again. Critical investigation of the facts should start from this verse.

# *Chapter XXVI*

## The First Easter

SINCE the Evangelists followed the method of selection and compression, attempts to weave their accounts into a harmony which will represent the exact occurrences must be very tentative; each Gospel account has already harmonized earlier traditions. But for literary [1] purposes, such harmonies are valuable, since they revive for us the Easter feeling with genuine power. It is primarily for this purpose, then—not as professing to be a close record of the facts—that the following ordered account is given.

After Jesus had died upon the cross, a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, who was among the friends of Jesus, though not (apparently) of the intimate circle of his followers, came forward to offer a resting-place for his deceased friend in a new-made tomb in his garden outside Jerusalem. The body was wrapped in graveclothes and placed in this tomb on Friday, after the crucifixion. The Sabbath passed, and early in the morning of the first day of the week (Sunday, as we now call it), a little group of women went out to the grave.

The tomb was a hillside sepulcher. Inside there

[1] And devotional.

were slabs on which the bodies of the dead would be laid. The entrance was closed by a great stone, round, like a millstone, resting in a groove in which it could be rolled aside by those who wished to enter the tomb. While the women were approaching the sepulcher, they debated who could roll aside for them the heavy stone. To their amazement, when they reached the tomb, they found the stone already removed, or shattered by an earthquake, and they concluded that the body had been taken away. One of them, Mary Magdalene, hurried off to tell the apostles of the discovery, while the others lingered for a time near the grave. There they had a vision of angels, who told them that Jesus was risen and charged them to go and tell his disciples.

Meanwhile, Mary had found Peter and John.[1] They ran at full speed to see for themselves. Years afterward John told the story. A young man then, he outran Peter and, coming first to the sepulcher, stooped down and peered in, but did not enter. Then Peter arrived. Impulsively he pushed forward and went in, and then excitedly called his companion. Where the corpse had been laid they saw something which made their hearts stand still. The body had been wrapped in graveclothes before the burial, the neck and face bare, and a napkin, or turban, wrapped about the head. So the dead are prepared for burial now, in the unchanging East, and so the body of Jesus was prepared. When the two disciples looked, they saw everything in perfect order; no sign of confusion, no "bloodstained" garments thrown aside, as if the body had been re-

[1] On the assumption that he is the unnamed disciple.

moved;[1] nor, on the other hand, any evidence that the body, clothing and all, had been taken away by marauders; the clothes were still there, but lying flat on the slab, even the turban, still with the fold or roll in it, lying where the head had rested.

John says that "he saw and believed." What did he see? Evidently that the clothes had fallen undisturbed, lying as if the body had exhaled out of them, vanished, without deranging the wrappings. That was what brought belief to John in a flash. To find the body gone might have meant nothing, though others sought desperately for a natural explanation of its disappearance; to find signs of confusion would have indicated theft; but to see the winding-cloths dropped down of their own weight and of the weight of the spices within their folds—that indicated only one thing: that the body had risen out of them. The hand of man had no part in this work. A quick glance told them that a miracle had happened. They saw—and what they saw made belief sure. It was the beginning of reasoned conviction; a first flash of faith.

Leaving the tomb, the two disciples moved slowly back to the city, marveling at what they had seen. Meanwhile, Mary had returned to the tomb. She stood near the entrance, weeping, and a little while later gained courage to look in. Lo! the tomb was no longer untenanted. At the head and feet, where the body had been laid, were angels, who asked why

[1] This last is Renan's picture, bloodstains and all! But dead bodies do not bleed.

she wept. "Because they have taken away my Lord," she said, "and I know not where they have laid him." Then, turning about, she saw in the dim light another figure. Dazed and unable to collect her thoughts, her first impulse was a natural one. The gardener—of course. Perhaps he had taken away the body, not caring to have the curious folk trampling through the place when they came to look and talk. He asked the same question, "Why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" "Tell me," she cried, "where have you laid him?" And then she heard a familiar voice, "Mary," and looking closely recognized Jesus and fell down to clasp his feet and cry out, "Oh, my Master." "Touch me not," he commanded; "do not cling to me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and tell them, 'I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.' "

This was the first of the resurrection appearances. Now let us return to the other women. They were on their way back to the city, to find the disciples. In their agitation and alarm, they probably became separated, and entered the city by different roads. One group, in their fear and astonishment, said nothing to anyone; the others, so one account says, were greeted by the vision of Christ, before whom they fell down in reverence. They came quickly to the disciples, with their excited story; but these had not yet heard of the visit of Peter and John, and the words of the women seemed to them but an idle tale. Later, Mary came with her story of the vision of the risen

Christ, but this, too, fell on dull ears. That is hardly surprising, even were Peter and John already with the others. It is just one more evidence of the truth of the story. The disciples were not in an expectant mood. They were not ready to receive news of a miracle. Their very slowness to believe adds strength to the account. They believed only under the compulsion of absolute proof.

That same afternoon two disciples were walking to the village of Emmaus, about seven or eight miles from Jerusalem. They were not of the Twelve, but were of the larger group, the rank and file of the followers of Christ. They had heard something, however, of the strange news which was circulating; but, like the others, they could not understand and they were still stunned and bewildered. St. Luke's Gospel tells their story in detail.

In the bewilderment of their bereavement, they talked drearily of the past, of all their hopes, of their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, of their disappointment in his mission, of the failure of his plan, and the tragic end of his life. As they were walking, a stranger joined them, whom they supposed to be one of the thousands of pilgrims who had come up to Jerusalem for the feast. He asked them why they were so sad as they walked and talked, and apparently they were a little annoyed at his ignorance. Could it be that there was anyone in Jerusalem who did not know the things that had come to pass there in the last few days? Was he some foreigner of the Dispersion, so-

journing in the holy city and unaware of the thing that had made this Passover season different from every other? They began to explain about it all. It was impossible to think or talk about anything else.

Soon, however, the stranger took the lead in the conversation. Their eyes opened in wide astonishment at the things he said. Beginning with the earliest prophecies, he explained how the Messiah was a predestined sufferer and through suffering was to enter into his glory. What a conversation it must have been! We may think of him, for example, reminding them of the words in the prophecy of Isaiah: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Very quickly they threw off their lethargy and listened breathlessly. The whole tangled story suddenly became plain. Their dull despondency gave way to wild hopes. New courage came into their hearts. The talk was so interesting that before they knew it they were at their own door and the stranger was saying his farewells and starting down the road. Then they aroused themselves, clung to him, begged him to come in and share their hospitality and tell them more. When, at their urging, he had entered the room, it seemed quite the natural thing that he should recline at the place of honor at table and say the simple blessing. He took the bread and blessed it and broke it—and they knew him! It was the Lord Jesus! Hardly had they recognized him,

when he vanished. For a moment they looked at each other; in one breathless sentence they told each other how their hearts had strangely burned within them as he talked with them in the way. Then they hurried out of the house and down the road and back to Jerusalem, and in a little while they were in the upper room, to tell of the Christ who had died and was alive again. There they found the apostles with their own excited story of other appearances; and while they were yet speaking, the Master came again.

He came suddenly and in a strange way. They seem all to have been talking—as doubtless they would, in their excitement—when a hush fell on them. Jesus was present! The doors were closed, and there had been no knock, nor had anyone seen him enter; yet there he stood. As he moved toward them, he said, "Peace be unto you." They were frightened beyond words, thinking they saw a specter; but he showed them his hands and his wounded side and then renewed their apostolic commission: "As the Father has sent me, even so send I you"; and he breathed on them, and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whosesoever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosesoever sins you retain, they are retained."

Thomas was not with the others at this appearance of the Lord; and when informed of it, refused to believe. "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side," he said, "I will in no wise believe it." A week later his test was met. They

were again in the room, with closed doors, and this time Thomas had joined the company. Again a hush and again the realization that Jesus was present. "Reach here your finger," he said to Thomas, "and see my hands; and reach here your hand and put it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." And Thomas fell on his knees at the Master's feet, with his cry of faith, "My Lord and my God."

This record originally closed St. John's Gospel, but there is added one other incident, very personal, of an appearance of the Master on the seashore. Seven of the apostles were in the boat, fishing, when he appeared and, learning that they had caught nothing, ordered them to cast the net on the right side. They obeyed, and the net was hauled up so filled that they could not draw it. Again there is John's flashing faith. "It is the Lord," he cried, and Peter plunged into the water to swim to shore, the others following in the boat. There they saw preparation made for their morning meal.

Afterward the three—Jesus, Peter, and John—walked along the shore. "Simon, son of Jonas," the Master asked, "have you fuller regard and affection for me than for these?" "Yes, Lord," said Simon, "you know how passionately I love you." "Then feed my lambs." Again: "Simon, are you sure of your regard for me?" "Oh, Master, you know I love you passionately." "Tend my sheep." Again: "Simon, are you sure even of your passionate devotion?" And Peter, grieved, said: "Lord, you know all things, you

surely see how devotedly I love you." "Feed my sheep."

And then, almost immediately, seeing John who had fallen behind them, Peter asked what this man was to do. "If I will that he should tarry until I come again, what business is that of yours?" said Jesus. "Do you but see to it that you follow me." [1]

One final question. We have not yet asked why, when the appearances of Christ came to an end, there was no aftermath of subjective visions for many months or years. Or, what amounts to the same thing, we have not yet asked how the first Christians knew that Christ would not appear on earth to them again. The only possible explanation is that there was something about the final appearance told elsewhere, which marked it as final: or, to use their own phrase, the disciples knew that Jesus had "ascended into heaven." The account of the ascension as related in the first chapter of Acts is, perhaps, naïvely framed; but it expresses a genuine historic fact. And it gives us a last attestation of the objective character of the appearances. *No subjective visions ever put an end to themselves.*

[1] This record ends with the early visions.

## *Chapter XXVII*

### The Gospel about Jesus

WHEN the Romans sentenced a criminal to execution, a placard [1] was placed on the cross, stating the nature of the crime. In Jesus' case this placard read, "The King of the Jews."

The historic accuracy of this fact is beyond question. No Christian could have invented it, for the wording of this placard was a constant menace to Christianity. Rome was morbidly sensitive to the slightest hint of political opposition, and for Christians to profess themselves followers of a man who had been condemned to death because of his royal claims was perilous in the last degree. Within a generation [2] they were sentenced wholesale as traitors to the Empire, and for two hundred and fifty years thereafter to be a Christian meant to live in constant peril of martyrdom. Nothing save the hard necessity of historical fact could have led believers to include and preserve in their traditions the statement that such a declaration was written over their Master's cross. Even in the earliest period, when the inclusion of the new faith within Judaism still offered some measure of protection, danger was none the less present; Chris-

[1] Technically a *titulum* or "title."
[2] After the great fire in Rome in the year 64.

tian Jews in Judea were always liable to denunciation as bad citizens.[1]

Jesus, then, was executed as a quasi-royal pretender. But history is full of stories of earnest men who have been put to death on trumped-up charges; might not Jesus be of their number? There is not the slightest evidence in support of such a contention. Jesus' disciples, of course, protested that Pilate had been given a distorted version of their Master's claims; but that there was a basic claim of this sort which could be distorted the disciples acknowledged to all the world. The first Christians declared triumphantly that Jesus had actually claimed to be royal. His Kingdom, to be sure, was not of this world, but nevertheless—or, rather, all the more—Jesus claimed to be and actually was a King. The Christians charged the Jews with perverting this claim, and with thus procuring a judicial murder; but they never charged the Jews with inventing the claim. Since none of our sources, friendly or hostile, does anything but affirm the fact, we are bound to conclude, then, that Jesus actually claimed to be Messiah. This conclusion we should have to reach wholly apart from the record of his explicit declarations found in the Gospel narratives. The evidence of the "title" on the cross is sufficient in itself.

As Messiah, he felt, not only that he was to reveal the way to God's salvation, but that he was to bring believers into that salvation. Acceptance of the truth of his teaching, consequently, carried with it devotion

[1] *e.g.*, Acts xxiv: 6.

to himself; God's true children, who heard Jesus, could not fail to be his disciples. Moreover, he knew that actually he was bringing men into God's salvation. In his own acts and teaching, first of all, the mighty powers of the present Kingdom were felt. Then these powers were extended further into the circle of the disciples, who thus, through their obedience to him, became in turn new centers of spiritual strength.

Not that only his own disciples could be "saved." He pictured the Old Testament saints, who had never known him, as matter-of-course citizens of heaven. He praised faith wherever he found it, even outside the ranks of Israel. According to his message, prodigals everywhere could be certain of their reception by the Father. Penitent publicans in all places could surely look for forgiveness. But to be "saved" at the end was one thing; to be already in the present Kingdom was another and greater thing. It was only through contact with Jesus personally that such a share in that Kingdom was possible.

As God's Messiah, his personal mission could not fail. Therefore, when confronted with the certainty of death, his faith rose above it. His vocation *must* be fulfilled; if not in this world, then hereafter. The more closely we read his story, the more clearly do we see that his faith in himself reached the highest possible point: his destiny was to be the celestial Son-of-Man-Messiah. Such was his profession before the Sanhedrin—calling out the horrified cry of "Blasphemy!" Such was the claim that could be so perverted as to lead Pilate to execute him as "King of

the Jews." Such was the faith—no other—for which Jesus died. Such was the faith he left with his disciples as he died.

To these disciples Jesus had been friendly, affectionate, and tender. Their devotion to him was unlimited. Yet their love was always touched with awe; "they were afraid to ask him." In Jesus, even at the moments of deepest intimacy, they felt a constant sense of "otherness." He was not as they were. In him they were conscious of a perpetual mystery. He had command of powers beyond other men's reach. Not only could he heal as no other man ever healed, but—there cannot be the slightest doubt that the disciples believed this—the very forces of nature were subject to him. Most mysterious of all was his knowledge of God. When he spoke, he spoke "with authority." In his words there was never a shadow of doubt or hesitation. "I say unto you" was his all-sufficient formula. When he spoke, God seemed real. When he was with his disciples, God seemed near.[1] "What manner of man is this?" The only answer they could give to such a question was that he was the one who, alone among human beings, stood wholly on God's side and not on man's; he was God's Messiah. And Jesus assured them that they were right.

His death shook their faith for a time; but with their knowledge of his resurrection all hesitation was swept away forever. He was proved now to be truly

[1] In modern technical language, the disciples' impression of Jesus was "numinous."

Messiah. Risen from the dead and gone into the heavens, as Son of Man he had taken his place on "God's right hand." That was the apostolic faith. And Jesus' teaching about himself and this apostolic faith were identical.

The triumphant joy of the Easter experience brought a thrill of unspeakable ecstasy to the entire band of believers. Within the next few weeks this ecstasy mounted to new and unparalleled heights, manifesting itself in undreamed-of gifts of power. Power was displayed in ecstatic phenomena, which had special appeal to men of the first century; but more permanently important was the sense of power in spiritual achievement. The leaders of the apostolic group proclaimed their message as men inspired, sweeping converts into the new faith by the hundreds. Every member of the community felt new strength coming into his life, making possible for him "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." The believers were transformed by the gift of God's Holy Spirit.[1]

It is clear that the general conception regarded the Spirit as sent by the Messiah. Toward this teaching Jewish apocalyptic had steadily tended, and John the Baptist had given the doctrine explicit formulation:

[1] The Book of the Acts of the Apostles concentrates this outpouring in the Pentecostal experience of the hundred and twenty disciples at Jerusalem. John xx: 22, however, connects the gifts directly with the resurrection experiences. For early Christianity as a whole, John expresses better the general truth. There were hundreds of believers scattered throughout Palestine, and we cannot believe that for all of them the first experiences of the new life of the Spirit occurred simultaneously.

"He shall baptize you with Holy Spirit." Thus far, then, the whole "gospel about Jesus" was still expressed in strict terms of Jewish Messianism.

It is one thing, however, to predict an occurrence, and another to experience it. The first apostolic experiences of the Spirit brought to the disciples a knowledge such as Jewish expectations had never imagined. As giver of the Spirit, Jesus (who by his resurrection had returned to earth and into contact with his followers) was now still in perpetual contact with them. He could reach his own—and they could reach him. Such a conception was wholly new. At this point the Jewish tradition breaks down, and genuinely Christian teaching about Jesus—"Christology"—begins. It is the result of Jesus' teaching about himself, *plus* the historic experience of the result of believing this teaching. Jesus' claims were justified in the lives of his disciples. Acceptance of Jesus as Master brings with it a certainty of the unceasing possession of spiritual power. This is the basic faith of Christianity.[1]

The formal prayers of the first disciples were, of course, addressed to the Father, but since through the Spirit they were bound to Jesus, they could pray to him as well.[2] They addressed him as "Lord," or more commonly as "Our Lord"; in Aramaic "Mara" and

[1] In part, it should be noted, this teaching was anticipated in Jesus' lifetime. The doctrine of the Spirit given through faith in Jesus simply continues on a higher plane the doctrine of the present Kingdom entered through faith in Jesus.

[2] *e.g.*, Acts VII: 59.

"Maraná." [1] The earliest known Christian prayer is the invocation "Maraná tha!" "Our Lord come!" [2] and the New Testament closes with this most primitive Christian formula.[3] So "Lord" takes its place beside "Messiah" as an accepted title for Jesus, the former emphasizing his present care, the latter his future victory. Thus in the speech ascribed to Peter at Pentecost we read:

> "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly,
> That God had made him both Lord *and* Messiah,
> This Jesus whom ye crucified!" [4]

Jews are rarely philosophically minded. Their genius is practical. They ordinarily face problems in concrete form. They were a race which did not cloud religion with metaphysical speculations. The first Christians, in particular, were men whose whole training had diverted their thoughts and lives from metaphysics in any form. They concerned themselves only with their immediate experience. As Jews they held the fundamental dogma that God is One; but, along with this, they learned that Jesus, too, was rightly the object of a genuinely religious devotion. How could these two facts be reconciled? In their experience, and therefore in their teaching, they knew Jesus to be invested with attributes that were properly divine. But, on the basis of a rigid monotheism, can the divine attributes be divided? Must not the possession of *any*

[1] According to rabbinical sources, the correct title to use to the Messiah when he appears.
[2] I Corinthians XVI: 22.
[3] Revelation XXII: 20.
[4] Acts II: 36.

of them carry with it the possession of them *all?* To Peter and the rest this problem hardly occurred; yet as time passed and the new faith made converts of a more reflective type such questions demanded an answer.

The result was a development—but only in the sense that it was the result of steady thinking. Effort must be made to give adequate expression to a faith already proclaimed in its essentials. We cannot trace, exactly, all steps here. The disciples' task was difficult. All the inherited vocabularies were inadequate. Old terms and concepts had to be modified—sometimes strained almost out of recognition. New terms had to be borrowed from other thought-systems. There was of necessity much experimenting; some of it was in directions very obscure today, and some of it was along lines that proved futile or even harmful. Terms and concepts, time after time, were taken up hopefully, only to be discarded as their insufficiency was discovered.[1]

Broadly speaking, the title "Lord" gradually took precedence of "Messiah." Then the latter began to disappear, its Greek translation "Christ" losing its original force and taking on the sense of a proper name.[2] This went hand-in-hand with an ever growing emphasis on present needs and a corresponding lack of stress on the future. With passing years the expectation of the end of the world, intensely vivid at the

[1] Not infrequently, however, such terms persisted in devotional language. Liturgical usage never quite keeps abreast of doctrinal development—perhaps this is "all to the good!"

[2] Today we are conscious of no impropriety when we say, for instance, "Christ was the Messiah."

beginning, receded more and more into the background; the apocalyptic scaffolding was taken down.[1] The Christians, therefore, sought increasingly to embody their experience of Jesus in other Jewish terms, chiefly connected with the teaching about the Spirit; "Wisdom" was a special favorite. As one result of this early speculation, the consciousness forced itself upon thinkers that Jesus' appearance on earth could not have been the beginning of his existence; he who so shares in God's activity must always have shared in it. How soon this doctrine came to be generally accepted we do not know exactly, but it was very early, so long before the time of Paul's epistles that the apostle takes it for granted everywhere, and never argues it.[2] In the famous passage that follows, he echoes feelings which he assumes to be undisputed; indeed, there is some reason to think that he is merely quoting a hymn already in use by the Christians:

> Who, being in the form of God,
> Thought God-equality no prize,
> But emptied himself,
> Taking the form of a servant.

When, around the year 50, Christianity spread on

[1] While apocalyptic provided the first terminology almost completely, the faith itself proved to be independent of eschatology. Christianity adjusted itself almost without effort to a realization that this world might go on indefinitely.

[2] Those interested in technical problems, however, might notice that modern philosophical theology usually places God above all time-space categories, so that such a term as "pre-existence" is scarcely appropriate, philosophically.

Gentile soil,[1] Greek converts attacked the problem with the aid of other thought-forms. Of these the concept of a "Logos," or "Word," is most familiar.[2] According to the most recent research, this term was not taken directly from the usage of classical Greek philosophy, but from the popular philosophic teaching current in Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor.[3] To search for any recondite depth of meaning in the expression would therefore be a mistake. The "word" is the means by which one person expresses his thought to another. The "Word of God" is accordingly the means by which God impresses His thought on the universe—and this "Word" is a Person, Jesus Christ. The new term gave first-century Christian thinking a certain precision of expression, but in substance there was actually little advance on the earlier Jewish-Christian point of view. In fact, the latest treatises on the Fourth Gospel maintain that the use of "Word" was earlier than the Gospel, and that it was not introduced by the Evangelist. It seems very probable, indeed, that he, like Paul, utilized a current Christian hymn. If this is so, he added some phrases of his own to adapt the hymn to his purpose; without his additions the hymn might be thus reconstructed:

In the beginning was the Word,
And the Word was with God,
And the Word was God.

[1] We cannot here discuss the steps by which Christians came to realize that the message was for the Gentiles as well as for Jews, nor the effect of this realization on their conception of Christ.

[2] John 1: 1, 14 and perhaps x: 35.

[3] There are purely Jewish antecedents as well.

In the beginning he was with God,
All things were made through him,
Apart from him was nothing made.

In him was life,
And the life was the light of men.

The light shineth in darkness,
And the darkness did not understand it.

The true light,
Which lighteneth every man,
Came into the world.

He was in the world,
And the world was made through him,
And the world knew him not.

The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,
We beheld his glory, as of the Father's only-begotten,
Full of grace and truth.

For of his fullness we all received,
And grace upon grace.

No man has seen God at any time,
God Only-Begotten, in the Father's bosom,
He has declared him.

"The Word was God": here the New Testament development ends. From the first this development was inevitable. Given the faith in Jesus as the heavenly Son of Man, given the experience of the Spirit through calling on his name, and no other end was possible.

Like Thomas, in St. John, men learned irresistibly that the only title fit for Jesus is "My Lord and my God." [1]

[1] This climax of the New Testament doctrine became in turn the starting-point of a further development in the Christian church—a long, laborious and painful development that continued past the middle of the fifth century. It terminated finally in the formula, "Two distinct Natures, one human and one divine, in a single undivided Person." Here theology—Protestant, in a later day, as well as Catholic—was content to rest for some fourteen hundred years. Modern research and modern speculation, however, have raised fresh problems, and theology is once more on the march. To quote the words of a wise and reverent contemporary writer, Professor Leonard Hodgson: "It took four and a half centuries to think out the problem in the terms of ancient philosophy. It may take as long again in those of modern. But 'he that believeth shall not make haste.' "

# *Chapter XXVIII*

## The Mystery of the Birth

BEFORE faith in Jesus had reached the point of describing and addressing him directly as "God," Palestinian Christians were hearing from teachers of high authority a new and strange fact about their Master. As his manner of leaving the world had been like that of no other man, so had been his manner of entering the world. Jesus had no human father.

Critical investigation makes clear that this teaching was first given in Palestine at a relatively early date. It comes to us in two sources, the opening chapters of our First and Third Gospels. The Jewish character of the First Evangelist is evident. As to the Third Gospel, while Luke himself was a Gentile, his infancy narrative is the most Jewish part of the entire New Testament. The Messianic doctrine of the opening chapters of his Gospel is not only purely Jewish;[1] it belongs to a stage when expectations of Israel's temporal prosperity had not yet been shaken off. "God shall give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever." "That he might remember mercy toward Abraham and his seed forever." "In the house of his servant David

[1] In the only reference to non-Jews (II: 32) the Gentiles receive "light," but Israel receives "glory."

salvation from our enemies." "Good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people." "Looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." [1] The "atmosphere" is wholly Hebraic. The birth-stories cannot, therefore, be explained by parallels from Greek myths which tell of the birth of a demigod from a god and a mortal. From such stories Jews would shrink in horror.

Of course, there were no such legends in Israel. After belief in Jesus' supernatural birth had been established, Christians in search of prophetic corroboration seized on Isaiah VII: 14, and in the First Gospel this verse is regarded (perhaps only by way of devotional interpretation for Jewish readers) as a prediction that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. But, quite apart from the question of what Isaiah actually meant,[2] the Jews of pre-New Testament days never regarded the passage either as indicating a virgin birth or, indeed, as a prediction about the Messiah. In all Jewish Messianic literature there is no suggestion anywhere that the Messiah—if a man at all—should be born in any other way than are other men.

Nor could the new teaching have been due to any depreciation of marriage in favor of an ascetic regard for celibacy. Such a doctrine was likewise unknown in Palestinian Judaism.[3] Chastity before marriage was, of course, a stringent precept, but for a girl to die

[1] I: 32-33, 54-55, 69-71; II: 10, 38.

[2] Old Testament scholars universally agree that the prophet had no such idea in mind.

[3] It appears, indeed, in Christianity, but only under Gentile influence and at a very much later date. Paul's arguments in I Corinthians VII rest entirely on apocalyptic considerations of expediency.

while still a virgin was regarded as a great calamity. To this day, Jews, when they visit a new-born child, pray that it may be brought "to the marriage canopy."

In other words, the reasons commonly assigned for the appearance of the virgin-birth teaching in Christianity, when carefully and honestly examined, break down. If the stories had originated in, say, Corinth, there would have been just ground for grave suspicion. But the stories originated in Palestine.

It is needless for us to retell these stories at any length. Nothing is more familiar. The scene of the Annunciation is one of the most exquisitely beautiful that has ever been painted. We see a lovely Jewish maiden—Mary of Nazareth. To her appears a heavenly visitant. As in the heart of every other Jewish woman, so hope sang in her heart that some day she might be the mother of the Lord's anointed representative, the Messiah-King who would come to restore again its old place and power to the Jewish nation. The angel tells Mary that she has found favor with God and that he has chosen her for this high and holy task. Mary cannot understand. She is betrothed—not yet married—and the angel declares that the child will soon be hers. She believes, though she cannot understand; therefore to her comes the explanation. The Spirit of God shall rest upon her; the power of the Highest shall overshadow her; the child is to have no earthly father; "the holy thing" to be born of her shall be called, therefore, the Son of God.

Grant for a moment that the story is true, and never

woman spoke a nobler or braver word than Mary's, when she said, "Be it unto me according to thy word." She gave her consent, with all that it meant of suspicion, misunderstanding, gossip, suffering—anguish so great that "a sword pierced her heart."

Equally perfect is the story of the birth itself: the pilgrimage to Bethlehem, where Joseph and Mary journeyed to be enrolled in the census; the rest in the stable cave; the manger cradle; how the child was born in the stable where they had found lodgment when the mother's hour drew near, because the crowds that had come up for the enrollment filled the little town so that there was found "no room for them in the inn"; the contrast of humility and glory; the lowly birth and the divine majesty of the new-born child, the song the shepherds heard, when an angel voice announced, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord"; and the glory that "shone round about them," while a chorus of other angelic voices sang, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace, good will to men"; the visit of the shepherds to the mother and child.

Most people love these stories dearly, and will not let them go, unless in all honesty they feel that they must. If they must be dropped, at least we may ask that those who would give them up show sufficient reverence not to go about the task with thoughtless haste and loud declamation. There are people who

are already sufficiently disturbed, confused, and grieved by the threatened loss of what they hold dear, without doubling their anguish through crudely flippant denial. In any investigation of these stories, it should always be borne in mind that they tell with a direct simplicity, worth volumes upon volumes of scholarly treatises, the significance to the world of the birth of Jesus. Let us also bear in mind that, if it should appear that some elements are of later accretion, the story of the supernatural birth must already have been in existence in order to become the center of such accretions.

Nor is the fact that the Birth Story is not mentioned directly elsewhere in the New Testament any argument against it. One cannot suppose that it ever became known to the apostles until long after their faith in Christ had become fixed. Of course it was not generally told. One can readily see why it would not have been told by Jesus himself. It is equally obvious that it could not have been made generally known during the lifetime of his mother. We could therefore hardly expect to find the doctrine explicitly in St. Paul. Neither is it surprising to meet bits of synoptic Gospel tradition referring to Joseph as Jesus' "father." There is, perhaps, some significance in the fact that these are all in St. Luke and St. Matthew, whose opening chapters make clear the sense in which "father" is used.[1] St. Mark, whose plan of commencing with

[1] Jews were familiar with a strictly legal but non-physical use of "father." The child of a man's wife was legally the child of the man, and he could not disinherit it even when its paternity was notoriously not his; his only remedy was to divorce his wife before

Jesus' baptism obliges him to omit a description of the birth, avoids all mention of Joseph.

Moreover, the supernatural birth could not, in the nature of the case, have formed part of the first apostolic preaching. That rested on public events, to which the apostles could bear testimony from their own experience. "Whereof we all are witnesses" was the invariable formula. Let it be repeated, then: belief in the miraculous birth and acceptance of the deity of Christ are two separate and distinct matters of faith. John, although his Gospel is a passionate defense of the latter doctrine, never finds it necessary to mention the former,[1] and even allows two references to Joseph as Jesus' "father" to stand without explicit correction.[2]

And is it not a fact that the story fits, with most extraordinary congruity, into the whole drama of the Incarnation? God was making a new start for the human race. In nothing was there—in nothing is there still—such desperate need of a new beginning as in the matter of sex. The instinct of earlier days, which accepted the story in childlike faith and found in it childlike delight, is a right instinct; certainly, it is not lightly to be disregarded.

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the child was born. This explains the genealogies, which trace Jesus' descent through Joseph. In one case, the child of a living man was legally the child of the man who might have been dead for years (Deuteronomy xxv: 5-6; cited in St. Mark xii: 19). The Old Testament custom was continued for some centuries into the Christian era. The practice finally was prohibited by the rabbis, although the law still stands and the alternative "release" ceremony is still continued.

[1] Unless vii: 42 was meant satirically; i: 13 is not relevant.

[2] i: 45, vi: 42. At the late date of his Gospel, indeed, he may well have thought explanation needless.

## *Chapter XXIX*

### The Gospel of Jesus

WE KNOW fairly well the Gospel which tells about Jesus. What was the Gospel he himself taught? Has not this been obscured—or in part forgotten—because of the time and effort spent in explaining his relation to the Father?

The exact opposite is the truth. It is the Gospel *about* Jesus which has saved for us the Gospel *of* Jesus. The acceptance of the teaching concerning him made his followers feel that his own message was utterly indispensable. Among the Jews of the day the burning question was: "How shall we face the Messiah when he comes?" And to this question the Christians —and the Christians alone—could return a confident answer: "Believe and live as the Messiah has taught!" Among the Messiah's functions, everyone believed, would be that of prophecy: he would declare perfectly and finally God's will for men. But—said the Christians—this function of the Messiah has already been fulfilled; the complete prophetic message has been delivered and is in our hands. "Moses indeed said: A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me; to him shall you hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. And it shall be that every soul that shall not

hearken to that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." [1]

The Christians, then, regarded themselves as the custodians of the Prophet-Messiah's teaching, which it was their duty, in turn, to pass on to others. They taught it publicly in their missionary appeals—of that we may be sure. But their greatest teaching activity lay among the converts they made. At first, when some one hearing a Christian preacher professed faith, he was immediately baptized and made a member of the new brotherhood. Most of these converts, accordingly, must have entered the community with a very rudimentary knowledge of the new Way of Life. Training must begin at once, and must continue until they were in full possession of all that they ought to know. This placed a most serious responsibility upon the Christian leaders.

The responsibility was increased to the breaking-point by the enormous numbers of converts with whom the community was soon forced to deal.[2] There was no precedent for such a task. Rabbis, of course, were well accustomed to the teaching of disciples, but the rabbis dealt with small groups of selected and intelligent scholars, who had unlimited leisure at their disposal. The Christian leaders, on the contrary, were face to face with thousands upon thousands of believers, living all over Palestine and outside it,[3] many of them of very simple understanding, men and women

[1] Acts III: 22-23; compare VII: 37.

[2] Making all allowance for Oriental picturesqueness in reporting numbers.

[3] Chiefly pilgrims who were converted when they visited Jerusalem.

who could spare but little time from the labor needed to sustain life. All this made the "pedagogic problem" of the apostolic band most difficult and puzzling. The only possible way of solving it was to reduce the instruction to the barest and simplest of essentials.

What Jesus had said or done during his early manhood could have been learned by anyone in Jerusalem, for his family had settled there; but the first Christian instructors were interested only in the period of his formal teaching. Even here a drastic selection was needful, without any attempt at completeness. Questions of time and place, except in extremely important cases, must be discarded; when and where Jesus gave his teaching was normally of no consequence. Details which only added vividness were likewise discarded. There could be no "purple patches." Indeed, the experience of these first disciples had been so wonderful that they were quite beyond rhapsodizing about it. Their one desire was to preserve a record of important facts and pass it on to others. To do this, such material as could be preserved must be arranged in a form which could be most quickly and permanently memorized.

We may divide this material into five main classes: Sayings, parables, dialogues, miracles, and the passion narrative. With the separate sayings the task was simple, for Jesus himself had given his words in a form so perfect as to defy improvement. Even in modern translations, his utterances have a quality which makes them impossible ever to forget. In Aramaic, their

wording was often rhythmical, or even rhymed.[1] The problem for the Christian teachers was the assembling of the single sayings into groups, according to some mnemonic rule—usually that of topic. Here, too, Jesus had prepared the way. There would, of course, be no hesitation, in treating a theme thoroughly, in bringing together the most characteristic sayings of Jesus relating to it, no matter on how many or what distinct occasions these sayings may have been uttered. In this way sayings-groups, having the appearance of regular discourses, were built up. To ask whether or not Jesus actually delivered just such discourses would have seemed to be, and actually would have been, wholly beside the mark.[2]

The parables need no discussion. Each is perfect, and each is unforgetable. Tradition did no more than assemble them into groups—there are seven parables, all dealing with the Kingdom, in St. Matthew XIII[3] —and perhaps to supplement some of them with a few words explaining their application.

The dialogues are formed around some saying of Jesus which (usually) could not be well understood without knowing the situation, such, for example, as his utterance on the tribute question. We are told, then, the occasion; how certain questioners came to him; their questions; Jesus' answer, including the spe-

[1] Rhyme in Aramaic is extremely easy, as the language has comparatively few word-endings.

[2] While our Gospels often tell us that Jesus "taught in the synagogues," they make no attempt to record his addresses. St. Luke IV: 16-30 is no exception.

[3] A discourse composed entirely of parables is naturally unthinkable.

cial saying; and (normally) a brief sentence describing the effect of his words. Each dialogue is a complete whole, capable of being taught just as it stands. Most dialogues are very short—about seven or eight verses—but occasionally two or more dialogues are combined into one. "Chains" of dialogues are familiar, and were certainly used in the first instruction; St. Mark II: I–III: 6 is made up of five dialogues, all giving disputes with the Scribes.

Miracles form a self-explanatory class. They were taught to illustrate how "Jesus went about doing good, and healing all them that were oppressed of the devil," [1] and to give believers confidence in his power. They, too, are generally given in very brief form.

Of course it will be understood that the first teachers did not sit down and consciously divide their material into these various classes, labeling each as they went along. The types tend in some degree to blend into one another,[2] and combinations of them are very common. A dialogue, a saying, and a parable, on the same subject were especially popular. There is surprisingly little in our first three Gospels, from the opening of the ministry to the passion, that does not fall under one of these four descriptions.

The content and order of the passion narrative were naturally determined by the events on the last day of Jesus' life. There never had been such a death as this. Not only did it display Jesus' nature in fullest clearness, but it was regarded as bringing salvation to all

[1] Acts X: 38.

[2] Though not as often as one might expect.

believers. Consequently, details are given much more fully. Toward the end every incident was important and time and place really mattered. Even here, however, the narrative is broken up into short paragraphs, each of which could be taught separately.

The first instruction, as has been said, was by topics selected for the immediate needs of converts. They must know the elements of righteousness; so they would learn more or less what we call the Sermon on the Mount. They must avoid the mistakes of their earlier teachers; therefore Jesus' denunciations of the Scribes and Pharisees were important. The converts must prepare themselves for the approaching judgment; therefore his sayings about the future would be indispensable. All aspects of Christian life must be covered in this way.

Normally the teaching was oral. If the new teachers followed the custom of their age—and why not?—they sat in the midst of the hearers and recited a saying, which the "class" would repeat aloud many times until it had been committed to memory. Then the next saying would be treated similarly, then the next, until the available time was exhausted.[1] This method is still in vogue in many orthodox Jewish schools today; Orientals memorize far more quickly and accurately than Western people.

General accuracy in the tradition of Jesus' words was indispensable; but, with so many teachers in so

[1] As not much time could be given on any occasion, the sections learned were necessarily brief.

many different places, and with oral instruction predominating, there was grave danger lest utterances be taught as coming from Jesus which were none of his. Hence there must have been some general oversight, something corresponding roughly to "teacher training." Such supervision would naturally be the task of the Twelve. When the place vacated by Judas was filled, the qualifications for his successor are stated; the new leader must be one who had been "companying with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, until the day that he was received up from us." [1] The force of these qualifications is evident; the new member of the Twelve must be a competent witness of all that Jesus had taught, and must know what Jesus did *not* teach. Inevitably, however, in the multiplicity of tasks which beset the Twelve, special duties must have been assigned to special individuals. The labor of preserving and perpetuating the tradition of Jesus' words seems to have been the special function of Matthew.

For this we have the evidence of an early second-century bishop named Papias, who took unusual interest in apostolic details and spent endless labor in collecting information. He tells us that "Matthew wrote in the Hebrew [2] tongue the 'oracles,' [3] and everyone interpreted them as he was able." In other words, the time had arrived when oral teaching was

[1] Acts 1: 21-22.

[2] *i.e.*, Aramaic.

[3] Anything about Jesus, whether a saying or an act, was an "oracle" to Papias.

becoming unmanageable, and so an official written account must be provided. Matthew did this work very objectively, so objectively that he did not even explain the more difficult passages.

In the meantime a further complication was present. In Galilee, practically the only language used by the Jews was Aramaic. But after Pentecost the headquarters, so to speak, of the Christian movement were shifted to Jerusalem, and many converts were made there. Jerusalem, however, was bilingual. Aramaic was the native language, but the city was flooded with pilgrims, most of whom spoke Greek. Many of these pilgrims settled in Jerusalem—to die in the holy city has always been a Jewish ideal—and continued to use their own language. From this class many converts to Christianity were made, and for their needs special provision was necessary. From the very beginning, accordingly, the teachers were obliged to provide Greek translations of Jesus' words and of the accounts of his acts. Probably the first written records began at this point, for it would have been very difficult to keep stable an oral tradition in translation. Certainly these "Hellenist" Christians, as they were called, would demand everything in their own tongue that was included in the "official" Aramaic tradition. We may be certain that when Matthew published his edition of the "oracles," a Greek translation soon followed.[1]

[1] When the Gospel spread to the Gentiles, written records would have been still more needful. Greeks were not accustomed to memorizing oral tradition.

Accredited teachers who had been with Jesus in his lifetime would not have felt bound to confine themselves to the material ordinarily taught. Members of the Twelve, above all, were free to enlarge and supplement the regular tradition in any way they pleased. The rank and file of the instructors, however, would be careful not to venture outside recognized limits, and would have been quickly called to order had they done so. Thus the early converts would become accustomed to a "standard" type of material, taught in generally accepted forms. It is this material, chiefly, which was used by the writers of our first three Gospels.

As far as we can ascertain, it is this stage of the tradition, also, with which Paul was familiar. He shows no acquaintance with written records of Jesus' words,[1] but he is familiar with the fact that these words have been collected. In I Corinthians VII, his converts ask him certain questions. One of them is, "May a wife depart from her husband, and marry again?" He replies, "Under no circumstances! And it is not I who say this, it is the Lord." Another question was, "Should a virgin[2] marry?" To this he replies, "I have no commandment of the Lord bearing on this matter; the best I can do is to give my own opinion." In other words, he knew Jesus' sayings, and knew that none of them dealt with this concrete problem.

Similarly, the whole body of Christian teachers had

[1] Although this proves nothing.

[2] The "virgin" in this chapter is something more than an unmarried girl, but the question cannot be discussed here.

a well-authenticated record of what Jesus had said and done—and this from the very earliest days. The story of Jesus, in substantially the same basic form, was a familiar story from the time he had left his disciples. This is the story we have in our four Gospels.

## *Chapter XXX*

### The Four Gospels

THE study of the Gospels, as we now have them, is fascinating, and this study is made even more fascinating in the light of modern criticism. This reconstructs for us the methods by which our present Gospels took form. They are shown to be very human —not exactly what they were supposed to be by devout readers of a former generation, but actually much more real and natural. And they show the same Figure which men have always found as they read the story—one who stands in a unique position to God and men, claiming unmeasured authority over his disciples and receiving from them unquestioned recognition of his authority and power.

Matthew's work was not the present Gospel which bears his name, but a much smaller document, made up largely of sayings and parables, with a few dialogues.[1] It had no passion narrative; but, beginning with the Baptist, it gave an orderly account of Jesus' teaching by topics, concluding with predictions of the final judgment. Its date we do not know; probably not far from the year 45, say fifteen years after the

[1] Such miracles as were included were for the sake of accompanying teaching, and had dialogue form.

death of Jesus. The place of writing was presumably Jerusalem. Its translated form can be reconstructed roughly by taking the passages in St. Luke that agree closely with St. Matthew but have no parallel in St. Mark. We may call it the "Sayings."

This work had a wide circulation, as was natural because of its authority; but it omitted many things and was soon supplemented by other writings. Luke tells us of "many" who undertook to write narratives. Of these "many," however, we can identify only two. One of them was Mark. The other was a Greek-speaking Jewish-Christian of Palestine—possibly Philip the Evangelist, who is mentioned in Acts. He drew up a collection not unlike the "Sayings," although written in a very different Greek style; added to it more miracles, a passion narrative, and an account of the Jerusalem resurrection experiences, prefixing to the whole an account of Jesus' birth. As this work was used extensively by Luke, it is customarily called "L." It seems to have been written around the year 60, certainly in southern Palestine. This book and the "Sayings," according to modern theory, were woven together by Luke into a continuous narrative nowadays called "Proto-Luke."

That St. Mark is the earliest of our present Gospels is no longer doubtful. The Evangelist wrote in Rome, about the year 70. His readers were familiar with Jesus' general teaching, and there are many things about the Gospel that suggest that they—and he—used the "Sayings." At any rate, while the "Sayings" includes little but sayings and parables, St. Mark con-

tains chiefly dialogues, miracles, and a passion narrative which admirably supplements the "Sayings." [1]

A very old tradition, which Papias quotes, says that St. Mark reproduces the teaching of Peter. This is corroborated by the contents of the book. It really begins with Peter's call. It relates events at which he was present with extraordinary vividness; we constantly feel that we are in the presence of an actual eyewitness. From Acts we learn that Mark, as a young man, was a member of the Jerusalem community in which Peter lived and taught, and that Peter was a familiar visitor at the house where Mark's mother dwelt.[2] During his most retentive years, then, Mark heard Peter tell the stories over and over again, until he knew them all by heart. Then Mark himself took up missionary work, and so in turn told the stories himself, day after day, for twenty years or more. Toward the end of Peter's life he worked with the aged apostle in Rome, and may well have been a witness of his martyrdom. After Peter's death, at any rate, he wrote down the stories of the Lord's life and teaching as he had heard them from the lips of Peter himself.

His plan, as always in the early teaching, was topical; "not in order," says Papias.[3] The Gospel itself

[1] The Gospel, as Mark wrote it, ends with XVI: 8, before the risen Christ appears. The remainder is supplementary and from another hand. Either the original ending has been lost, or Mark intended to write a second treatise, beginning with Jesus' resurrection.

[2] As has been said already, this house was possibly the place where the Last Supper was held.

[3] Although we do not know exactly what idea Papias had in speaking of "order."

shows this. After an introductory chapter, we are given five anti-scribal dialogues; then five scenes illustrating various opinions of Jesus; then three parables; then five miracles illustrating faith and lack of faith; and so on. We observe, moreover, that while the basic material is Petrine, Mark arranged and annotated it in such a way as to insist on the universality of Christianity, so giving to Peter's tradition a Pauline coloring.

Matthew's "Sayings" and Mark's Gospel made up together an ideal account of Jesus and his work, but to have different types of tradition in separate documents was inconvenient. Consequently Luke, who in his "Proto-Luke" had already united the "Sayings" with L, enlarged his work by adding to it copious extracts from St. Mark; the result was his Gospel as we now have it. At about the same time, some unknown Jewish Christian united the "Sayings"—which he reproduced more fully than Luke [1]—with St. Mark almost entire. Too modest to give his own name to his production, he let it stand to the credit of the apostle who had written the "Sayings"; it has been called ever since "The Gospel according to Matthew." Both Luke and this unknown author wrote shortly after the year 70. The Gospel according to Luke was composed for the use of Gentiles, although it is not as Pauline as St. Mark. All conjectures as to the place where it was written are mere guesswork. St. Matthew presupposes Jewish-Christian readers, and it is not in any way

[1] This is simpler than to suppose, as some do, that he used still a *fourth* written source.

"Pauline." Although it approves of the Gentile missionary work, it considers Jewish Christianity the purest form. It must, therefore, have been composed somewhere on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, probably in Palestine.

These three Gospels rapidly displaced all earlier and rival works; indeed, for a while St. Luke and St. Matthew threatened to displace St. Mark. They are known as the "Synoptists," and the relations between them constitute what is called the "synoptic problem." We have sketched these relations, as they are generally understood today, but certain consequences of the Evangelists' methods should be observed.

The oldest part of the written tradition is found in the "Sayings." Experts agree that this work is, generally speaking, very trustworthy. The sayings contained in the "Sayings" are homogeneous, betray no interests later than the lifetime of Jesus, and are uniformly on the highest level. Students, therefore, in reconstructing what Jesus taught explicitly, always begin with this work.

As St. Mark is the earliest of our Gospels, his account is usually to be preferred to parallel versions in the other Gospels,[1] for, nine times out of ten, the parallels are merely St. Mark rewritten. In using St. Mark, however, we must distinguish between the older material he employed and the notes he added; a rather delicate task in some cases. We must also be on our

[1] This does not apply to Luke's passion narrative, which was taken from L.

guard against assuming that all of St. Mark's tradition is from Peter, although probably the great bulk of it is.

Of the material in St. Matthew and St. Luke which does not come from either St. Mark or the "Sayings" the most unquestionable tradition is the parables. Otherwise there is very little additional matter in St. Matthew. The L source in St. Luke is not easy to reconstruct without some experience in synoptic work and a good knowledge of Greek. As it contains little that in one form or another is not paralleled in the "Sayings" or St. Mark,[1] the task of analysis would best be left to the experts.

When one feels assured that he has worked back to the oldest and most reliable tradition, he must be warned to keep in mind one other fact. We are dealing with sources arranged topically. We have, therefore, no right to suppose (say) that the events in St. Mark's fifth chapter occurred after those in his second. Moreover, since the first tradition was quite indifferent to topography, it is a serious error to assume that we can recover much topographical information from it. Maps of the "journeys" of Jesus drawn out of Mark's narrative mean literally nothing. It is for this reason that in our treatment of Jesus' ministry we have made little attempt to describe his movements. The tradition was not concerned with such detail. Its whole thought dealt with more vital matters.

We must remember, too, that the separate paragraphs of our tradition were arranged for pedagogical

[1] Always excepting the passion narrative.

purposes, the teacher adding or omitting whatever seemed needful for the immediate lesson. It is sheer waste of energy to spend much time in analyzing the psychological progress of thought in any of these sections.

Even when our three Synoptic Gospels were written, they were already in need of explanation. The atmosphere of their tradition is that of Palestine around the year 30, and their vocabulary is technically Jewish. Toward the end of the first century, most Christians were Gentiles. They knew very little about Jewish religious terms and customs. The very title, "Messiah," "the Anointed One," was obscure, since anointing as a religious rite was unknown among the Greeks. "The Kingdom of God" demanded so much explanation that the phrase was little used. "Son of Man" had become a meaningless title to those who knew nothing of its Jewish significance. Few Christians had ever seen a Pharisee. The temple, now destroyed, was as remote to them as it is to us. Their interest in apocalyptic study was rapidly declining, except at moments of special stress. These Christians, moreover, while intensely anxious to believe aright, had neither the time nor the ability to concern themselves with the past stages in the formulation of their beliefs. Christ, as God's eternal Son, meant everything to them, but the steps by which Jesus' Messianic consciousness had developed meant little or nothing. Much of the synoptic tradition, therefore, they made no attempt to understand, or, if they tried, understood most imper-

fectly, often even altogether erroneously.[1] The time had come to rewrite the story in terms of permanent validity, and this task was taken up by John. His purpose was to use language which no one of his readers could fail to grasp.

Nothing in this Gospel is left in a halfway stage. The method is admirably illustrated by the writer's use of Jesus' parables. When we read the parables in the older tradition, we sometimes say to ourselves: "Exquisite, but precisely what does it teach?" John was determined that no one should be in doubt as to what was taught. In his two famous parables, that of the Good Shepherd and the Parable of the Vine and the Branches, he thoroughly works the interpretation into the parables themselves.[2] "I am the Good Shepherd"; "I am the Vine." So, while on occasion he uses traditional Jewish terms, he normally replaces them by simpler equivalents. In this way, "Kingdom of God," in almost every instance, becomes "Eternal Life." The apocalyptic is carried back into the present life. It is the decision we take *now* that determines God's judgment for us. Jesus, in his historic teaching, purposely made the Messianic implications in his words ambiguous, although, as we look back, the correct meaning is clear enough. John saw no reason why Christian readers should be made to puzzle themselves with such ambiguities.[3] Why not make such passages say what they actually mean? Thus all obscurity is removed

[1] Only those who have studied early Christian Gospel interpretation realize how very wrong it often was.

[2] The result is what we call "allegory."

[3] Some of which were interpreted in an amazingly perverse fashion.

from Jesus' sayings about himself; from the beginning, in the Fourth Gospel, he proclaims himself as what he actually was.

Nowadays, to explain an obscure writing we furnish it with a commentary. But, even nowadays many people are unable or unwilling to use a commentary, while in John's age a commentary would have been an absurdity. The narrative is therefore made to provide its own commentary. The readers, he felt, could not possibly go wrong, now, with the story thus interpreted for them. The result is that his Gospel is the most popular and the most useful of all the four. It not only makes clear the meaning of both the words and deeds of Jesus, but in anything that has to do with the nature and person of Christ its guidance is definite and sure.

On the other hand, the fact that the narrative is its own commentary makes it difficult for us to use it for purely historic purposes. Just how far the interpretation colors the story is a matter much disputed among scholars, especially as to some of the events which John narrates. Are these events also made self-interpreting? Is there woven into the history something of the significance of the history? In some cases we may be reasonably sure that the accounts are wholly objective; in other cases we cannot be so sure. In this book, therefore, we have preferred to keep on the "safe" side, for the most part using St. John only to illustrate the meaning of the story taken from the older tradition.

The author of the Gospel was certainly named "John," and was certainly an "Apostle." Whether he

was one of the Twelve or a Jerusalem disciple is still a matter of debate. His work was first published after his death, with a supplementary chapter—the twenty-first—by one of his own disciples, explaining how it was possible that the aged saint could die before the Lord came again. The date of publication was close to the year 100, and the place was Ephesus.

## *Chapter XXXI*

### The Meaning of It All

AS WE have traced the story of Jesus' life and teaching, we find an amazing thing. Never has there been a record of human friendship quite like the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. His was a great and wonderful life, which led them on and on, always extending just beyond their understanding, their thoughts about their Master never quite keeping level with their experience of him. They follow him with ever-increasing amazement. They see one who is human like themselves, bound by the strictest human limitations, subject to human infirmities; yet one the mystery of whose person they can never escape. He seems anxious that they should consider this mystery. "Who do men say that I am?" "Who do you say that I am?"

What an astonishing thing that the question should still be asked! What other world leader ever concentrated thought in this way on his own person? What other religion stands or falls by the answer to such a question? What other teacher makes the question so insistent that it compels serious thought in all future centuries?

While the earlier Gospels unconsciously show how

little the disciples were able to understand, they leave no doubt as to the greatness of the Figure they were called upon to understand. Jesus heals the sick, raises the dead, has authority over the powers of nature. He asks men to forsake father and mother, wife and children, rather than fail to follow him. A man who excused himself from immediate discipleship, is told to "let the dead bury their dead." Another who would first go and bid farewell to his family is warned against putting his hand to the plough, only to turn back. Those who follow must deny themselves and take up the cross with Jesus.

He is the Son of Man who teaches with such authority that, though heaven and earth shall pass away, his words will never pass away. All things have been delivered to him by the Father. No man knows the Father, but he to whom the Son will reveal Him. He will give his life "a ransom for many." He comes "to seek and to save." He concentrates all the mystery of his divine consciousness in a sacramental act, and gives his body and blood as the food of the soul. He "goes as it is written of him," but goes willingly as one whose blood is "shed for many for the remission of sins." He calls to himself all who labor and are heavy laden and promises to give them rest. He "has power on earth to forgive sins." He will come again "in clouds, with great power and glory." He will be seen then "sitting on the right hand of power." His "fan is in his hand," as he comes in judgment. He is "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed."

Most startling of all, of course, is his claim to be the judge of men. "The Father judges no man by Himself. He gives over all judgment to the Son." He gives him this authority to pronounce judgment, "because he is the Son of Man," tempted as we are and touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but the Son is given authority also, that "all men may honor me as they honor the Father."

These last words are found in St. John, but Mark's primitive Gospel makes it plain that Jesus is to come again in glory to judge the world, and Matthew's Gospel gives the grounds on which the judgment will be based:

> "The Son of Man shall come in glory, and all the holy angels with him. . . . Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. . . . Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. For I was anhungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.
>
> "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee anhungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Surely, there is no difference between the Lord of whom the earlier Gospels tell us, and the Lord of whom the Apostle Paul speaks, or the Lord of whom the Apostle John writes. Everywhere he is seen as doing marvelous works, acting with power, speaking with authority, entering upon a work in full assurance that his authority is of heaven, conscious that his death will be a blessing, sure that it will issue in victory, declaring as he vanishes from their sight that his presence will be with them to the end of time, always human and yet never anything but divine.

The marvel is, that no one dreams of calling Jesus an impostor. Some, it is true, have made him a fiery enthusiast; some, a fanatic expecting the speedy end of all things; some, an unworldly idealist with intuitive faith in a heavenly Father. But, like the accusers at his trial, these witnesses do not "agree together." Each omits what is inconsistent with his own theory. One after another, their portraits are discarded. None shows the many-sided character of Christ. The world has never been able to escape the mystery of his person. He has never been satisfactorily explained in terms of humanity. "Do not speak like that," Charles Lamb is reported to have said, when some one had spoken flippantly of Jesus; "do not speak like that. If Shakes-

peare came into this room, we should all spring to our feet; but, if Jesus Christ came, we should fall on our knees."

The perpetual miracle is that we find in Jesus everything he claimed for himself. The miracle is even greater: We find the God of Jesus in the life of Jesus. He is himself all that he said he was, and all that he declared God to be. If we were to think long and carefully of all we wish to find in God, and then describe all the hungry heart desires, the description could hardly be other than what Jesus Christ was in his earthly life.

We cannot understand how the first preaching of Christianity proved so wonderfully effective, unless we realize that the early disciples lived in the warmth and glow of an experience the thrill of which never left them. We need to remind ourselves (whether we have fully accepted their view or not) that these men, to whom we go to gain our first impressions of Jesus Christ, lived in an atmosphere of reverence, devotion, amazement, and awe. They felt something of "holy fear" as they looked back at their friendship with their Friend and Master. Their remembrance of those days of friendly intercourse gave them a sense of the mystery, the beauty, and the glory of the experience they were trying to pass on to others. They lived as men who suddenly found themselves transplanted into another world. They felt that they had been in vivid contact with the divine. It so showed itself in their speech that others also felt the glory of it. Looking

back to the days when the Lord Jesus had companied with them, they seemed to say: "Now—now, at last, we understand what it all meant."

What did it mean? Nothing less than this, that when they listened to his words they were hearing one who spoke, and had a right to speak, as the Voice of God; when they looked at him they were seeing God; when they touched him (wonder of wonders) they had actually touched God. They had gazed upon and their unworthy hands had handled the Word of Life. They had seen the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

# *Appendix I*

## Palestine in Jesus' Day

BY B. S. E.

HEROD the Great died in late March or early April of the year 4 B.C.; this date is positively settled.

During his reign—which lasted for thirty-seven years—Palestine was technically not part of the Roman Empire. It was what was called a "federated state," under an "allied king," who within his own realm ruled as an independent monarch. He was, however, bound to Rome by a treaty which made him subservient to the Emperor and, in particular, forbade him absolutely to wage war. At his death this treaty expired, and Palestine came directly under Rome's control until the Emperor Augustus should decide its future. He thought none of Herod's family capable of governing the whole country, and accordingly he divided it into three parts. The southwest quarter—Judea, including Samaria—he assigned to a son of Herod called Archelaus.[1] The northwest quarter—Galilee—and the southeast quarter—Perea—he gave together to Archelaus' brother Antipas; in the Gospels he is always called simply "Herod." The remaining

[1] St. Matthew II: 22.

quarter to the northeast went to another son of Herod [1] named Philip.[2] Other Herodians mentioned in the Gospels are a second Philip,[3] his wife Herodias—who deserted him for Antipas—and their daughter.[4]

Neither Archelaus, Antipas, nor Philip was granted the title "king." Archelaus had to be content with the inferior grade of "ethnarch," and the other two with the still lower rank of "tetrarch." But, on paper, at all events, all three were independent rulers of independent countries, responsible to Rome only for the order of their respective domains, and (undoubtedly) for the payment of a regular contribution. In none of these countries was there any resident Roman governor, nor were there any Roman soldiers, so long as this arrangement lasted. In Galilee it lasted throughout Christ's ministry, so that the "centurion of Capernaum," whose servant he healed, was in Antipas' service, not Rome's; his position was about that of a modern chief of police.[5]

Archelaus was a failure, and in 6 A.D. Augustus removed him. He then turned Judea into a minor Roman province, under a "procurator." [6] Of these procurators there were many, the most celebrated being the fifth, Pontius Pilate; he held office for ten years,

[1] By a different mother.

[2] St. Luke III: 1. "Cæsarea Philippi" was named from him.

[3] St. Mark VI: 17.

[4] Her name, which does not occur in the Gospels, was Salome. It may be of interest to know that, after the death of John the Baptist, she married her uncle Philip and appears to have made him a very good wife.

[5] Tetrarchs were not permitted to keep a standing army, but were allowed a sufficient force of soldiers to act as constabulary.

[6] Hence the Roman soldiers who performed the crucifixion.

beginning in 25 or 26 A.D. Generally these procurators kept out of Jerusalem except at the time of the great feasts,[1] and for most purposes they preferred to govern through the traditional Jewish officials.

These officials were known as "elders" or "rulers," and they acted as members of "councils" or "sanhedrins." [2] In villages these councils contained seven members; in cities twenty-three; in Jerusalem (the "Great Sanhedrin") seventy. In theory Palestine was governed by the Law of God as written in the Old Testament, which was thought to cover both civil and religious problems. These elders, as the authorized interpreters of the Law, were solemnly ordained to their office, and to them were committed all functions, legislative, executive, and judicial. The decisions of the Great Sanhedrin were supposedly more or less infallible, and these decisions were binding on Jews all over the world. In practice, however, the "civil law" decisions of the Great Sanhedrin could not be enforced outside of Judea, and even there they were subject to revision or veto by the procurator. Outside Judea the local Palestinian sanhedrins were controlled similarly by Antipas or Philip, while outside of Palestine Roman law of course took precedence.

Taxation was determined in Judea by the procurator, and elsewhere in Palestine by the tetrarchs. The collection of the taxes, all through the ancient world, was carried on by regular companies of professional collectors, who bid for the privilege; these collectors

[1] Their residence was at Cæsarea Stratonitis, on the seacoast.
[2] St. Matthew x: 17.

were the "publicans."[1] These taxes, while severe, were not utterly exorbitant, but they were complicated by the ancient law of the tithe. This laid a tax of 10 per cent on the gross yield of all agricultural produce, which had to be paid to the temple authorities, over and above all other taxes. As other industries than agriculture were few, the result was a crushing burden, which drove many Jews out of Palestine. Consequently, the "rich" man was usually under suspicion of dishonesty. On the other hand, in the warm climate and the open-air life, the "poor" were spared the squalid conditions of city slums.

The religion of the Jews was explicitly the religion of the Law. Consequently the correct interpretation of the Law was a vital matter and a chief Jewish preoccupation. The official interpreters, as has been said, were the elders, but there were so many elders that their average standard of education was necessarily low, and they depended for guidance largely on experts. These, known as "scribes," and addressed by the title "Rabbi," were men who devoted their lives to the study of the Law, after a period of elaborate training.[2] But, while a scribe's opinion was always entitled to respect, it was not binding until it had been adopted by a sanhedrin.

The decisions of the sanhedrins, especially those of the Great Sanhedrin, and the teaching of great scribes

[1] Although they had the authority of the government behind them, publicans were not public officials.

[2] St. Luke, in fact, calls them "lawyers." In later days scribes were ordained, but probably not at Jesus' time.

of the past made up the "tradition." But in the New Testament period this tradition was not yet uniform in principle, and there were, broadly speaking, two conflicting theories.[1] One party maintained that the Law must always be interpreted literally. So new problems, not expressly treated in the Law, lay outside the Law. This was the view of the Sadducees. The other party held that the Law, being divine, must have foreseen every possible contingency, and therefore was capable of indefinite expansion; from the standpoint of the Law there was no such thing as a "new problem." Such was the teaching of the Pharisees.

Since "Scribes" and "Pharisees" occur together so often in the Gospels, the terms are frequently confused, but in reality they describe entirely different things. The "Scribe" was a man learned in the Law, who might belong to any party or to none.[2] The "Pharisee" was an adherent of a definite party, and was not necessarily a man of special learning. To be sure, most Scribes were probably Pharisees, but only a small proportion of Pharisees were Scribes.

The Sadducees, so far as we can make out,[3] were an aristocratic group, the "blue-blood" of Israel, many of them of especially pure priestly lineage. They lived chiefly in Jerusalem and included the "chief priests" who had charge of the temple. Most high priests seem to have been Sadducees. As aristocrats, they were in-

[1] In reality there were more than two theories, but the others are not important.

[2] So today the fact that a clergyman holds a doctorate tells us nothing about his denomination.

[3] We really do not know very much about them.

tensely conservative. The Pharisees were organized around 130 B.C. as a sort of religious order, the members taking vows to observe a rigorous rule of life.[1] Their view of ever-fresh possibilities in the Law rendered them in some measure progressives; it was they who made the doctrine of a future life an article of faith for Israel.

There were about six thousand Pharisees in Jesus' day, while the number of Sadducees was probably much smaller. The latter held most of the offices in the Great Sanhedrin, but the Pharisees controlled a majority of the votes.

The only form of worship prescribed by the Law was that of the temple. This worship, despite its gorgeousness, was losing its hold on the people. For one thing, the priests as such were not held in special respect, since any male descendant of Aaron was a priest by the fact of his birth,[2] and multitudes of Jews claimed such descent.[3] So numerous, in fact, were the priests that they could officiate in the temple only a few days each year, while the privilege of burning incense never came more than once in a lifetime.[4] Outside the temple the priests had practically no duties at all, and they lived and worked like other Jews; it is for this reason that priests are so rarely mentioned in the Gospels. The high-priesthood, moreover, had forfeited all prestige. The old high-priestly line became

[1] Chiefly as regards tithing and the laws of ritual purity.
[2] With a few unimportant exceptions.
[3] Today any Jew named "Cohen"—and many others—is supposedly a priest.
[4] St. Luke 1: 9.

extinct about 160 B.C., and, in Jesus' day, the high priest was merely an ordinary priest appointed to discharge high-priestly duties. He was named by the procurator and paid for his office in money. He could be—and was—removed and replaced at the procurator's pleasure.

The "synagogues," of which we hear so much in the Gospels, were "lay" organizations, for which the Old Testament had made no provision.[1] Their primary purpose was instruction in the Law, with worship as a secondary consideration. In the synagogues, as Jesus knew them, readings from the Law and the Prophets, an instruction, and a few incidental prayers made up the service. Anyone could officiate at any part of the ceremonies, but the larger synagogues were under the control of a "ruler," [2] who selected the officiants from the congregation.

[1] In theory any ten male adults may organize themselves as a "synagogue" at any time.

[2] Appointed by the local sanhedrin.

# *Appendix II*

## Chronology

BY B. S. E.

THE most probable date of Jesus' birth is 7-6 B.C. At that time Herod the Great was in difficulties with Augustus, so making possible in Palestine the census mentioned in St. Luke II: 1-2. The name of the governor of Syria was, however, not Quirinius, but Saturninus; and there is reason to think that Luke actually wrote the latter form.

The "fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar" in St. Luke III: 1 may be either 29 A.D., dating from his accession to the Emperorship, or 27 A.D., dating from his assumption of rule over Palestine.

The indication in St. John ii:20 points to about 27-28 A.D.

The year of the crucifixion cannot be computed. Astronomical calculations are of no service, for the date of the Passover was settled by actual observation of the preceding new moon. There is, of course, no way of determining now when the official Jewish observers first saw the tiny lunar thread in March of any year. Moreover, we do not know whether the Passover began on Thursday or on Friday night.

We do not know how long the ministry lasted.

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